

# Empowering the Intangible

Art of Management & Organization Conference 2016

Conference Proceedings

Edited by Dr Jenna Ward & Prof Stephen Linstead



Photo: Mariano Cecowski, Cueva de las Manos (Cave of the Hands), Río Pinturas, Argentina, c. 7,300 BC

**EMPOWERING THE INTANGIBLE**  
exploring, feeling and expressing through the arts

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**Empowering the Intangible:  
Exploring, Feeling and Expressing Through the Arts**

**8<sup>th</sup> Art of Management & Organization Conference**

**IEDC-Bled School of Management, Slovenia, 1-4 September 2016**

In the spirit of exploration, play, creativity and critique, the 2016 Art of Management and Organization conference highlights the intangible aspects of organizational life. Proliferating our academic and professional discourses are calls to recognize, engage and empower the intangible aspects of organizational life – the felt, sensory and emotional aspects that so often go under the radar. Like the medieval court jester that could speak of things courtiers could not, the conference theme “Empowering the intangible” seeks out novel ways of exploring, feeling and expressing management and organization through the arts.

Building on the work of the 2012 Creativity & Critique theme in York and the 2014 Creativity and Design theme in Copenhagen, the 2016 conference embraces the arts and aesthetics as critical design elements – as inquiry, methodology, development resources, etc. – to explore, feel and express the felt, sensory and emotional aspects of management, leadership and daily organizational life. The 2016 Art of Management & Organization Conference sees over 150 delegates from around the world coming together to explore, feel and express what it means to empower the intangible through the arts in the form of conference paper presentations, interactive workshops, community art projects, films, installations and performances. Where else would you find such an open, critically creative approach to business and management studies?

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This publication presents a selection of full papers presented at the AoMO conference in 2016 and have been subject to peer-review.



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## A safe haven for emotional experiences: perspectives on the participation in the arts

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### ***I feel good***

Making art feels good. This is a truth that does not need scientific evidence. Especially to whom who have practiced or practices the making or the appreciation of any kind of art at any kind of level. However, even though this experiential truth does not necessarily need scientific support, several studies confirm anecdotal evidence: participation to artistic experiences stimulates positive emotions (Hichem, 2015). In other words: it feels good.

But in which ways does this happen? Is it true that emotions in art experiences are mostly positively charged? In this paper I will discuss the complexity of this topic by elaborating on the metaphor of the arts as *safe haven*. This reflection will be mostly conceptual but as empirical support I will bring examples from a research study on artistic creativity (2011-2014), where, in collaboration with colleagues from the research group ARIEL (Arts in Education and Learning), I collected professional artists' narratives on the topics of the cognitive, emotional and relational elements of creative processes (Chemi, Jensen & Hersted, 2015). The methodological approach of this study was qualitative and based on retrospective narratives, collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The 22 interviewed artists (11 females, 11 males, average age 53,5, standard deviation 14.7σ) produced more than 23 interview hours divided in 18 interviews (some collaborating artists were interviewed in pairs). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, where necessary translated and analysed. All the artists accepted to be quoted by their names and even contributed to the texts' internal validity by giving us feedback on content and formulations in their own transcribed interview. They covered a wide variety of art forms and genres: literature, poetry and scripts (Siri Hustvedt, Morten Ramsland, Michael Valeur); dance and choreography (Palle Granhøj); acting and theatre directing (Eugenio Barba, Julia Varley, Kirsten Dehlholm); music (Anders Koppel, Benjamin Koppel, Marco Nisticò, The Mira Quartet); film-making (Annette K. Olesen, Mary Jordan); visual arts (Michael Kvium, Julie Nord); digital arts (Signe Klejs, Niels Rønsholdt); design (Rosan Bosch, Rune Fjord); architecture (Inger Exner, Johannes Exner). The artists interviewed allowed me to look behind the scenes of their artistic creativity and to collect narratives on multiple aspects of the making of art. In the present paper I will gather the findings that discuss the emotional side of art-making and I will propose a conceptual interpretation of the arts as a safe haven.

### **Many ways of participating to artistic experiences**

Many artistic experiences are unlikely to inspire positive uplifting or positive emotions in general. One example for all can be the plays of Irish play-writer Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) that make their audience feel uncomfortable, sad, puzzled if not outright stupid and incompetent. In one of these plays, *Waiting for Godot*, audiences might experience a feeling of discomfort or anxiety when nothing happens twice, especially towards the end of the second act, when the characters repeat the same routines in a growing sense of seeming desperation and helplessness. They talk, they eat, they blame each other, they sleep, they fall down and they are waiting, but nothing decisive happens and they continue to wait. The point is that Godot never shows up and never will (Chemi 2013). Art is not by

definition positive at all, neither for the perceiver nor for the maker. Effects of artworks on recipients are described in several studies on artwork reception but one does not even need to engage in scientific discourses to find the above postulate true: the experience of art is not necessarily universally positive or universal in general. Artists are often “willing to venture into places that do not necessarily make life easier”, as Danish visual artist Michael Kvium tells in his interview (from now on, unreferenced quotes will draw from original empirical data). “Art doesn’t do that”, he goes on and then adds:

Those who are trying to make art into something that makes us better people or something like that - that’s something you can get in church, you cannot get it from art. Art might equally well make us much worse and much more unhappy, or at least make us aware that we are much more unhappy than we thought and make us aware that we are blinder than we thought, making us aware that we are very limited. And I think all artists are working against their own limitations all the time, trying to figure out how do I exceed my limit? How can I fool this restriction?

Kvium beautifully points at the core of the relationship between art and emotions and he seems to protest against a specific form of instrumental use of art: the forceful bending of art towards positivity. I don’t believe that Kvium disagrees with the fact that artistic reception and making can inspire positive emotions, but I understand his complain as a philosophical statement on the function of art. This function is not necessarily to generate or express positive feelings, because art is research, is inquiry, is a venture in the unknown. Art does not oppose positivity, but it resists to all sort of instrumental reduction to a *single* purpose. The quest into the unknown is more important and more meaningful than any happy feeling can be. This gives rise to the question: in what sense can the concept of positive emotions be used in the world of art and art perception? In which sense art incites positive emotions without denying art’s brutal realism, as described by Kvium? The point is fundamental for the argument of a possible transfer of learning from the arts to education or organisations. If optimal learning is conveyed through dynamics of positive emotions, regulation of feelings and positive functions of negative emotions (Charyton et al. 2009), then it is worth exploring the nature of emotions in artistic experiences.

Appreciation of art and artistic experiences varies across cultures and historical periods. Variables that inform art appreciation are multiple and complex: gender, upbringing, status, values and many others. As all emotional experiences, though, art experiences might contain some universal elements. This paper will not review the complexity of the topic of artistic reception, but rather will focus on one specific way of engaging with the arts. Rather than thinking reception (or appreciation, or appraisal) as a passive activity as opposed to the active making of art, I wish to propose, inspired by Gardner (1994), that both experiences require an active participation to the arts. Differing in the quality of experience, receiving and making art activates cognitive and emotional processes that are complex, engaging and challenging. At the same time, the challenges offered in artistic experiences can be perceived as safe and meaningful. I argue that the feeling of well-being might emerge from the optimal balance between challenges and safety that individuals might experience in the arts and by its metaphorical essence.

### **A safe haven**

According to Gombrich (1959, p. 47) emotions aroused in encounters with the arts that are apparently negative can be beneficial to learning and growth, if they lead to e.g. catharsis (as in Aristotle) or psychological development (as in Freud). According to Eco, both Freud and Aristotle hint at the fact that artistic experiences carry an implicit (positive) learning effect: “the metaphor is not only a means of delight but also, and above all, a tool of cognition” (Eco 1984, p. 100). Eco’s semiotic approach, which he links to biological processes by stating that “making shortcuts within the process of semiosis is a neurological fact” (Eco 1984, p. 129), is consistent with Gombrich’s psychology of art and most cognitivism. Gombrich defines thoughtful thinking (Perkins 1994) within the arts as “riddles” to be

cognitively understood by means of registration of differences (Gombrich 1959). In a similar approach Perkins (1994) identifies several cognitive outputs of arts experiences (wide-spectrum cognition, dispositional atmosphere, multi-connectedness) and aligns them with bodily-sensory perceptions (sensory anchoring, instant access) and motivational elements (personal engagement). In other words, Perkins maintains that when we look at art we activate different kinds of cognition, e.g. "visual processing, analytical thinking, posing questions, testing hypothesis, verbal reasoning" (1994, p. 5), build up dispositions to deep thinking, and encourage connection-making with personal and intimate issues and social, extrovert, universal themes. By doing so, art experiences also involve a motivational level: works of art *are made* to draw and hold attention, no matter if positive (e.g. sympathy) or negative (e.g. anger). The arts "invite and welcome sustained involvement" (Perkins 1994, p. 83). The work of art is always there, as an anchor, a witness to one's reflection, no matter if it is the original or a photographic reproduction or a vivid memory, in the case of performing arts. The senses are activated and sharpened by the object observed, "you can [always] check something with a glance, point with a finger" (Perkins 1994, p. 83) even in the performing arts, where memory works as imprint. Being present at artworks as observer or maker, in the above perspectives, is always a positive act, rich in development and learning, no matter whether the experience or product has a positive or negative charge on perception. These perspectives conceptualise experiences in the arts as positive and full of learning potential no matter the value judgment involved in them. In other words, experiences in the arts that feel negative (for instance feeling inappropriate to decoding cryptic artistic texts) do not bring negative cognitive and emotional effects, but might bring a rich learning and development to the individual. This might bring forth the feeling of a safe haven even in extremely challenging experiences. My conceptualisation of this psychological state is grounded on two phenomena: flow experiences and metaphorical discourses.

Coherently with the positively felt state of deep concentration and calm that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined as *flow*, artistic experiences seem to me to be designed in order to initiate flow state. The occurrence of flow, the deep motivation described in terms of focused concentration on a given task, is made possible by clear frames, on-going feedback and an optimal balance between the challenges of the task at hand and the individual's resources. The latter means that no matter how difficult a task is, the experience of hardness is contextual and relative to the individual's tools for coping with the challenges to be met in the task at hand. Especially interested in matters of artistic creativity, topic with which he began his career (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi 1976, Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990), Csikszentmihalyi has described the state of flow in creative individuals and, among them, artists. In my opinion, the arts offer a safe place to enquiring challenging tasks or experiences because of its essential materiality and its dimension of make-believe. Participation to artistic experiences happens in a third space: the space of make-believe, where ordinary events are transformed in extra-ordinary experiences. In other words, the arts offer a playful place where individuals can be experimental without suffering the consequences they would in real life. Failing, in make-believe situations, does not bear the same consequences as in ordinary life. On the contrary, it allows for performing cultural practices in a safe environment. According to flow theory, what could tip the artistic experience into a negative judgment is the lack of individual competence in decoding the artistic riddles. This might happen (and does happen) when individuals are not acquainted with artistic practices and specific language. Fortunately, the safe haven experience is available to almost anyone, as proficiency in the language of art is not needed: low skills are enough to approach the arts, because of the perceptual and intuitive essence of artworks. Understanding artworks is about engaging in intuitive, heuristic and sensory cognitive and emotional processes.

The other side of the feeling safe in artistic experiences is, in my opinion, due to the arts' basic nature, which is metaphorical. The shift from ordinary to extraordinary is permitted by the essential quality of artistic communication: metaphorical discourse. According to Eco, metaphor etymologically means "transfer" or "displacement" (1984, p. 90); it allows something to stand for something else. This gliding from one meaning to the other is paradoxically defined in Eco as a legitimate lie: "When someone

creates metaphors, he is, literally speaking, *lying* – as everybody knows. But someone who utters metaphors does not speak ‘literally’: he *pretends* to make assertions, and yet wants to assert *seriously* something that is beyond literal truth. [...] Someone uttering metaphors apparently lies, speaks obscurely, above all, speaks of something other, all the while furnishing only vague information. [...] An *implicature* must click in the listener’s mind. Evidently, the speaker meant something else. [...] On what encyclopaedic rules must the solution of the metaphorical implicature base itself?” (Eco 1984, p. 89). Metaphor does not convey literal meaning, as do ordinary similes, but a different (shorter) form of comparison. Art is, in this perspective, at the same time a real-life aesthetic experience and a metaphor for life in general and artworks are the expression of human experiences, visions, dreams, ideas, understandings, and life as lived. Meaning is generated by means of the metaphoric structure, in between the real/literal and the artistic/figurative world. In this dialectic duality the positive/negative dilemma might not be relevant, as positive emotions in one world might turn into negative in the other. As for the Aristotelian understanding of tragedy, painful events on stage might become meaningful and liberating in the real world of audiences and actors. In the arts, the positive/negative dichotomy seems rather to be bypassed, through the metaphor’s shift of meaning and artistic meaning-making.

### **The fatigue of making art**

So far I have postulated that: 1) art appreciation and art-making are nothing but different ways of participating to artistic experiences, 2) artistic experiences engage, per definition and practice, feelings of safety and well-being, 3) emotions in the arts are not necessarily positive or negative in a universal sense. In the following section, I suggest to look closer at the emotions involved in professional art-making. When individuals depend on the making of art against the background of their work and their professional identity, art-making, rather than feeling safe and happy, can be fraught with frustrations and conflicting emotions. How do artists cope with that?

In my interviews with professional artists (Chemi, Jensen & Hersted, 2015), the most frequently mentioned negative emotion is the fatigue that follows periods of deep concentration on artistic tasks (Ramsland). After having been in flow, artists feel exhausted, tired, emptied (Ramsland, Rønsholdt, Olesen). The artistic process can be so emotionally and cognitively charged that “sometimes you need to shut it off”, as Jordan says. She continues by describing the shutting off of creativity process as a recharging of energies, regeneration: “Sometimes you can just do nothing but create, create, create, and then all of a sudden the brain is fried because you just can’t see anymore. I think this idea of invention and seeing things differently and transforming them also [is] like if you do too many mathematical problems which also results in... visions that are shut down”.

Another downside of artistic creation is the repetitive routines involved in artistic practices. Movie director Annette K. Olesen discerns different sides of emotional negativity in art-making. On the one hand, her work can be “extremely tedious at times”, on the other, the high level of uninterrupted commitment to her job can be exhausting, especially if judged by non-artists:

I have friends who do not make movies, nor are even close to artistic industries and professions, and sometimes it’s very difficult for them to even partly understand my working hours, or to understand that I can be [...] very busy when I’m up to something, and I do so because it is not just a profession, it’s me, it’s an investment to me. This is sometimes very exhausting.

The artists’ extreme commitment to their job and developed sense of passion turn some specific kinds of challenges into negative resistance that artists try to diminish, address or eliminate. This might take the form of administration tasks for some (Fjord, Nord), for others it might be the lack of economic support (“missing funding”, Granhøj) or lack of recognition (Hustvedt) or lack of a trusting and trustful community of collaborating artists (Dehlholm). Even more interesting, some artists label as negative



some specific components of their creative effort. What musicians from The Mira Quartet call “listening technically” or the issues that bad artistic leadership can bring forth are far from being positive challenges that stimulate their creativity, but barriers to the unfolding of artistic creativity. Palle Granhøj, too, mentions that it can be “terribly frustrating” being in the creative room, dealing with obstructions of any sort, even if obstructions are the chosen method of work. Similarly, Olesen admits that it can be extremely castrating for the creative process if one is due to collaborate with someone who always says “no”. Artistic processes can be very delicate and tantalising (Valeur). One interesting contribution to this theme comes from actress Julia Varley, who mentions a couple of deeply meaningful experiences that challenged her professional and human development. When she was in high school she witnessed a man screaming vulgarities at a group of girls who were demonstrating for their political ideals. The feelings of unjustness in this situation made her do something very concrete: she chose to step into the politically engaged group and demonstrate together with them. With the same emotional pattern, she turned the feeling of being of being rejected and of being of no use when she first joined Odin Teatret into a drive for learning and development.

### **Turning negativity upside-down**

Having mentioned the negative feelings involved in the making of art, I must also mention that the artists interviewed mentioned positive more often than negative experiences. I interpreted this finding according to the positive bias implicit in the artists’ narratives: asking artists about their main passion (their art and artistic process) and about their main motivational drives, will inevitably bring forth positive feelings. Asking someone who is passionate about a given activity to talk about this activity is a request that is destined to be positively biased.

Another interpretation resides in the disposition of the arts in looking for opportunities in spite of challenges. Artistic practices are based on the building of rules and constrictions against which to find original solutions. This might become a dispositional mind-set in artists. An example of this can be the above-mentioned challenge of exhaustion: artists seems to have turned this problem upside-down by giving large emphasis to the necessary role of pauses. Olesen describes her artistic creation as “a mixture of going on and quitting”, while others tell that, if they have been in the process of creation too long, they need to step out of it and find a resting place. Even distractions in this upside-down logic can be welcome as possibly positive elements in the creative process: distractions may allow for the creative battery to recharge.

Some of the interviewed artists describe the bridging of the positive/negative poles and substantiate it differently. Valeur, for instance, bypasses the very duality of positive and negative, stating that what is relevant in the artistic creative process is the depth of thinking and involvement, which can paradoxically contain both positivity and negativity:

For me it has never been important whether it was positive thinking or negative thinking, for me it has been more important if it was deep thinking or shallow thinking. And good art gets sharp by its depth and depth contains the same amount of light and darkness, or, it contains the same amount of tearing things down as of building things up. So if you cannot... if you do not master both, then it's just not good enough.

A similar approach can be found in Barba, where artistic composition is portrayed as an emotionally hard but rewarding struggle. The theatre director extends the emotional dilemma in the arts to the – emotionally paradoxical- enjoyment of the process of struggling:

[it feels good] not when I solve but when I am struggling. This situation is connected with a feeling also of anguish and despair. I repeat to myself that I will not manage it this time. You're

driving through a landscape which is grey and never ends, and suddenly you see the sand, a tiny piece of blue sky, and a beach reveals itself to your eyes and you become aware that that you are leaving behind the grey season, the oppressing feeling that there was no way out. I start discovering my orientation and this orientation is not something, which I knew when I started, it is a surprise, an amazement, almost a chock.

This quote almost seems to contradict what other artists maintain about the effort of concentrated attention, which feels enjoyable and easy while flow experience is going on, fatigue and exhaustion coming after. What Barba says here is that he enjoys the challenge *per se* while the art-making process is progressing. The very struggle is full of expectation, as the metaphor of the grey clouds relates. Palle Granhøj also mentions challenges, but in his artistic processes obstructions are balanced by practices in safe environments. If the dancer is doing his materials and routines all day long “it is very safe to come down [to the studio] for the dancer, for they know that this is how it is done”. This optimal balance between the feeling of challenge and of safety recalls the flow balance. Moreover, enjoyment *per se* indicates an *autotelic* pleasure, which in the arts is a fundamental prerequisite for the very choice of initiating a creative project. It follows that this enjoyment has actually a *telos*, an instrumental end or purpose: the making of art. As jazz musicians Anders and Benjamin Koppel say in their interview, if artists do not enjoy the process in itself, they cannot create and hold on to the challenges of the creative process.

Fredrickson and Branigan have explored the concept of positivity and define emotion as follows: “Emotions are short-lived experiences that produce coordinated changes in people’s thoughts, actions, and physiological responses” (Fredrickson & Branigan 2005, pp. 313-332). They believe that positive emotions are able to expand the individual’s attention, cognition and action: “[emotions] broaden the scopes of attention, cognition, and action, widening the array of percepts, thoughts, and actions presently in mind” (2005, p. 315). Positive emotions appear to be active agents in extending individual cognitive strengths and building emotional resilience or robustness. Their studies show that positive emotions are able to expand individual learning potential and develop optimal knowledge. Fredrickson’s broaden-and-build theory is based on the belief that positive affect can influence learning by generating ideas that are: unusual, flexible and inclusive, creative, open to information, effective. However, these studies do not specifically consider emotions arising from experiences with the arts, but are more generally concerned with psychological states.

The intellectual dimension of art experience and enjoyment is also emphasised in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), where the cognitive effort in the decoding stage is interpreted as a complex problem solving approach that intellectually can be very satisfying. The intense involvement of attention that individuals engage in response to a visual or auditive stimulus in the arts occurs for no other reason than to sustain the interaction with the artwork. The experiential consequence of such a deep and autotelic involvement is “intense enjoyment characterized by feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery, and a sense of human connectedness” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990, p. 178). What in this perspective is valued as satisfactory is the resulting solution to a challenging problem, which emerges from a cognitive process with a purpose in itself (autotelic). In other words, individuals engage in artistic activities because the experience is rewarding in itself, because of the cognitive challenge that is being addressed. The generated emotions are intense and positive (joy, wholeness, curiosity) and meaningful to the individual (personal, human), and they relate to fellow human beings (connectedness) and the world in a deep desire to explore (discovery). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson see this positive synergy as valuable in relation to learning and education because it is able to arouse learning-enhancing emotions, such as commitment, curiosity, desire to learn and ease of learning.

Another area where potential negativity is turned upside-down is the activity of problem-solving. Throughout the interviews, problems are mentioned as something to be sought out, something to be enjoyed and something to be solved. Problem finding suggests the heuristic nature of artistic creativity

and problem solving the implicit cognitive effort involved in understanding artistic problems. The affective side introduces a whole new field of attention to the relationship between emotions and creativity. The satisfaction of turning a problem or crisis into something good is voiced in Johannes Exner's description of the creative process: "you have a very big problem, and then you say, this is a challenge. So you could say that your mood swings up and down, but if you control it, it becomes fun. And we have been... we've had many crises [in our architectural firm], so I do not know, we have also had cases where we have pulled out because we couldn't deal with [it], and so you could say it was also a shame, but oh well..." This statement by the then-86-years-old architect hints at a possible psycho-emotional interpretation of the artists' strategies of and for turning negativity upside-down: persistence in the artistic effort and commitment to the artistic project.

### **Motivation, resilience and persistence**

Artists, similarly to other creative individuals (Hennessey 2010), have proven throughout history their ability to master the skills of persistence. As Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) discuss in their empirical study on creative individuals –including artists- who have had long-term engagement with creative tasks, persistence is one of the key characteristics of creativity in later life. Probably due to the arts' inherent heuristic function, professional artists are called to be or become exceptionally resistant to constraints. In order to navigate through uncertainty, artists need to have or develop perseverance and determination. A further hypothesis might be that the social role of the arts in challenging the establishment is the reason why artists are recurrently left at the margins of society. Values of cultural renewal or ideological provocation are implicit within the arts as one of their functions, together with aesthetic uplifting, appreciation of beauty, divertissement, ideological statement, transmission of knowledge or values, cognitive effort and so forth. Art genres can hold this function to a higher or lesser degree, depending on the socio-cultural context and historical period. For instance, classical ballet is not, in our contemporary Western society, means of radical renewal in society. However, both incremental and radical changes continuously occur within the genre and practice of ballet. Conservative or totalitarian societies generally react strongly against this role or function of the arts, with the consequence that in these socio-cultural conditions artists acquire a marginal role. Struggling for their own existence and right to exist has always been the artists' life-condition, together with the creative task of struggling with a medium or material. As Julia Varley says: "you have to be patient and work hard, and that is not something which is obvious, because a lot of people think that acting is just, yes, being inspired by something".

Creating something new with value is often an undertaking that comes with the ability of persuading others of the appropriateness of the creative solution (Runco 2010, Simonton 1995). Standing up to societal pressure to persuasion and the open heuristic method makes artistic creativity a hard nut to crack, and artists exceptionally disposed to persist against adversities. Hustvedt mentions almost matter-of-factly the acceptance of hardship as a part of the artist's identity: "[...] Hardship can be good. None of us can avoid it, after all. Resilience can come out of hardship, and that resilience also plays a role in becoming an artist".

With Weisberg (1993) I believe that the artists' resilience in creative tasks is nothing but an ordinary process, common to and shared by all individuals. However, unlike Weisberg, I wish to propose that artists are trained and train themselves to continually learn and employ these dispositions and these skills in order to create artistically. Perseverance, in the artists' case, is a matter of endless training and preparation for hardship, being justified by the very nature of artistic work: the dialogue (or for some, the fight) with a resistant matter, medium and conveyance of meaning through those means, together with the task of constant persuasion. But what motivates artists in their solid determination? What are the elements of this artistic resilience?

Much is still to be explored regarding the motivational side of artistic creativity. Fundamental contributions are from Amabile (1996) Deci (1975) Deci and Ryan (1985) and indirectly Csikszentmihalyi (2000, 1996). It is still much debated whether intrinsic (inherently interesting tasks) or extrinsic (task engagement in order to achieve external goals) motivation drives creative individuals and creative processes. The latest findings in this field, mostly collected by means of controlled psychological experiments, identify the close interrelation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drives and emphasise the prominence of contextual conditions. In her first account on motivation and creativity Amabile (1983) advocated the intrinsic argument: "Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity, but extrinsic motivation is detrimental. It appears that when people are primarily motivated to do some creative activity by their own interest in and enjoyment of that activity, they may be more creative than they are when primarily motivated by some goal imposed on them by others" (p. 15). Subsequently, she revised this sharp dualism in the light of new evidence (1996) and proposed a more contextual and relational approach. Her most recent work, like the work of Deci and Ryan (1985), seems to suggest that, regardless whether a task or activity is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, creative outputs can be achieved. What seem to make a difference to motivation are traits related to the individual subjects, the nature of the task at hand and the environment in which individuals interact.

When the nature of task (Amabile 1996, p. 133) is specifically artistic the activity turns out to be at the same time challenging *and* rewarding. The interviewed artists describe their tasks as enjoyable in themselves, which is consistent with motivation theories that indicate enjoyable activities as being the most motivating (Amabile 1996, p. 149). Pleasantness of the artistic task is defined in Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson as autotelic, as it has an end in itself (1990). Rather, I propose that artists, even though their art-making has a specific goal (exhibition, performance, recording, publishing), *suspend* their attention to this goal or output, in order to fully concentrate on art-making *as if* it were autotelic (Chemi, in press). Even in artistic experimentations or improvisational performances the task holds a specific goal, such as finding new ways or solutions, but the goal disappears in the joy of the making. For instance in jazz improvisation the goal is a musical communication by means of a fine balance between solos and orchestra pieces, but as Anders and Benjamin Koppel recurrently say in their interview, what they feel is the fun of it. They maintain that musicians cannot keep on being musicians if they do not perceive their tasks as pleasurable

Emotionally, the nature of the artistic task seems to be characterised by passion and its dysfunctional twin, obsession. In the interviewed artists, though, these emotions, rather than jeopardising the creative effort, canalise the individual's attention and creative skills by means of the interplay and interconnection of emotions and rationality. Differently from the stereotype of the artist as slave of his or her passions, or the stage-divided understanding of creative processes, where creativity and intuition (divergent thinking) are separated from rational or critical decisions (convergent thinking), I suggest that both intuition and rationality work together, often simultaneously in artistic processes. As Ramsland says of his writing process, very little is left to inaccuracy and neglect - complexity is embraced and thoughtfully framed in creative routines and working processes, improvisation is unleashed and looked at critically, chaos is doled out in the right proportions and at the right time. According to motivation theories, being so focused on his task, the writer might find motivating any experience that is salient to his task. Meaningfulness of the task at hand, or as Deci (1975) defines it, the "salience" of the task is what might motivate or enhance motivation in individuals. Similarly instrumental might be the appropriateness of experiences to the task at hand: for instance Deci (1975) mentions the fact that feedback giving information on one's competence has positive effects on creativity and performance, which is consistent with Amabile (1996).

One more trait that is related to motivation and its subjective perception is resilience. As Julia Varley says, creativity to her is the "ability of turning a weakness into a strength", which she has consistently both in her career and in her private life. She does that by getting along with the life conditions she

meets and by keeping on trying, thus engaging in an undefeated dialogue with herself and with the process:

Each creative process is different so you can never rely on what you did the time before. The only thing you can rely on is that you trust that at some point it will start working. So in all of your desperation and tears and aargh... inside you, you know that at some point it will come out. But it's like you can never know how to make a creative process, you know that you can do it, but every time you have to learn how to do it all over again.

The continuous process of learning is in this description overflowing with feelings: feelings of frustration, of being overwhelmed, but also feelings of trust and hope. Implicit we discern the actress' skills and experience reassuring her about the perceived chaos of the creative process. Varley knows that each creative process is unique and she knows, because she has experienced it, that by keeping on trying at a certain point solutions will pop up. Moreover, she knows that creative processes are diverse and imply a methodological openness on how to do them or how to learn them. She *knows* all that even when she *feels* discouraged. Trusting the creative process might be one of the basic elements of the artist's resilience. Resilience is defined in different ways, but here I intend it broadly as "the ability to bounce back or overcome adversity" (McCubbin 2001, p. 3).

Rooted in the quest for knowledge, the process of artistic creativity meets the emotional and cognitive challenges of doubt, uncertainty and insecurity. What creative artists do in order to focus on their process is, according to Kvium, to build the conditions for preserving a clear mind and sharp artistic judgment despite external negative conditioning. This might imply that one of the artists' strategies for creativity is their conscious acquisition of resilient psycho-emotional (e.g. trust in the process), cognitive (e.g. learning how to do it) and methodological (e.g. applying critical skills) strategies. No artist seems to suggest that these strategies are biological or innate and they mention a variety of possible drives for these resilient behaviours: Barba says is it interest, others point to curiosity (Hustvedt, Kvium), others again mention extrinsically motivating rewards for hard work, such as good food, treats, hedonistic pleasures (Klejs and Rønsholdt) and underline that individuals can throw themselves into hard work only for short periods.

### **Building safe havens**

Summing up, the issue of emotional responses in and to artistic experiences is complex and often contradictory. First of all, artistic participation in the arts is always an active endeavour but can consist of different qualities, depending whether the activity is receptive (appreciation) or generative (art-making). Secondly, participating in artistic endeavours stimulates a wide spectrum of emotional valences and intensities. In other words, artistic experiences can be positive or negative, strong or weak, or even a mixture of both poles (think back about Beckett's tragicomedy). What is common to all sort of artistic experiences, no matter the quality of participation or the emotional valence of artwork perception, is the fact that individuals can find a safe haven for cognitive and emotional challenges, for experimentations, for learning and developing, for including heuristics in knowledge, for indirect cognition and communication (metaphors), for training resilience and opportunity-seeking strategies. The core of these safe environments can be described, as in flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), as the optimal balance between the challenges of artistic tasks (the struggle with ideas, the dialogue with materials and media, the effort of ex-expression) and the (cognitive, emotional, sensory, bodily) competence of the individual. Navigating through challenges can be frustrating or difficult, but the arts always offer an engaging space where the ordinary is sensory and heuristic and where the ordinary glides into new, original and unexpected meanings. The artistic haven unfolds in the safety of make-believe, of invented worlds where metaphors signify while hiding and hinting, while tickling the senses and bodily knowledge.

If society should expressly build safe havens for whole human beings, where creative, critical, empathic, humanistic thinking unfolds, the arts must play a central role. These environments should be carefully designed by means of cross-disciplinary discourses, where the arts can speak their proper language and seduce participants into playful and exciting journeys. These spaces will be spaces of learning, questioning and developing for individuals together with others and in dialogue with materials, media and meanings. Finally, the well-being of participants will be guaranteed by the establishment of cultures of persistence –where mistakes are welcomed and part of the working process- and resilience.

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## Sensus communis: Belonging to something bigger than oneself

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## **Sensus communis: Belonging to something bigger than oneself**

Museums are typical expert organizations, ivory towers, where audiences are considered passive objects of professional activity. Our paper discusses a case where involvement of an amateur group in museum professional practices took place. Lay people very seldom have a chance to participate in museum professional work, especially in the knowledge production field.

Our paper draws on a doctoral dissertation in management (Ahmas 2014) which explored a gradual dismantling of an ivory tower of the museum with the help of a social knowledge community and shifted towards more collective and shared ways of knowledge production. We are especially interested how the museum organization started to co-produce knowledge and professional contents together with a group of local heritage amateurs. The particular group of amateurs comprised a group of local heritage enthusiasts who were given the title “the Wise People”. To participants the new way of organizing seems meaningful, rewarding and strengthening togetherness between themselves.

We want to understand how such amateur expertise is constructed and maintained and how it can benefit a cultural organization, such as a museum. We claim the answer can be described with the concept of *sensus communis* (Kant, 1790/ 2009; Ramirez, 1991). In other words, the amateurs are attracted to belong to a community that shares and appreciates similar aesthetic values than they do themselves. *Sensus communis* is manifested in aesthetic bonds between those involved as well as in their commitment to the institution.

### **The Amateurs at the Museum**

For almost seven years the Renlund Museum in Kokkola Finland has been working closely together with a group of local heritage amateurs, who are called “the Wise People”. The group started to grow from three enthusiasts who had had a lively contact with the museum for some years. Eventually more people joined them and soon they were around 35 persons who were given the attribute “the wise” because they possessed a vast stock of local heritage knowledge outside the museum professional sphere, they created a social knowledge community (Brown & Duguid 1991; Hakkarainen et al 2002; 2012).

During the first years of cooperation some of the museum professionals established a close contact with the group by letting them to step into their substance areas breaking the closure of expertise. This is one of the points where we identify the institutionalized ivory tower of an expert institution and its gradual change.

Eventually the co-operation resulted in lots of new knowledge produced by the open expertise principles (Parviainen 2006; Koivunen 2003; 2005; 2009) where the professional expertise was supplemented with amateur expertise. It has benefited the museum exhibitions, research and audience processes. The most important activity has been the monthly group meetings, where people get together to share and talk about their knowledge, stories, memories or e.g. old photographs. The group also makes excursions in places of local interest, produces small scale exhibitions in malls, gets people together in events in order to record local heritage as well as writes articles in the local paper to disseminate the knowledge collected.

“The Wise People” give the Renlund Museum their energy, knowledge, contacts and enthusiasm which are all connected with the professional knowledge capital of the museum. This makes it an open expertise process, which is constructed in a similar fashion as a patchwork quilt where every knowing individual has an equal stance in complementing others’ knowledge.

The paper relies on the philosophy of relational constructivism. The empirical data describing experiences of the volunteers in the process with the museum was collected following the principles of action research and included observations and interviews. The data was then analyzed thematically. Our aim is to answer the question: *what motivates the amateurs to commit to a longtime collaboration with the museum*. The answer we get is the understanding of organizing by aesthetic grounds, *sensus communis*, which relies on significant knowledge which in our case concerns the local heritage.

## **Sensus Communis**

Immanuel Kant (1790/ 2009, 346) launched the concept of *sensus communis aestheticus*, a variant of the Aristotelian *sensus communis* (Atalay 2007, 46-47), which rests on a judgement by logical mind and practical reason. *Sensus communis aestheticus* instead means commonly shared aesthetic experiencing by senses. It arises in a person who identifies his/ her experience of which he formulates a judgement that he/she wishes to share with others. It is based on unselfish motives and is both individual and shared by nature. It considers people inherently social creatures who hope to resonate with others by sensing. When saying *...this touches me deeply ...* or *... that is so lovely...* we appeal to others in order to make them agree with us emotionally, i.e. we hope that they share the experience we felt. It is a matter of emotional sensing which draws on *sensus communis aestheticus*.

In order to share an experience we shall adapt it into a form or a message that others can reach. We need media or concepts that we can commonly share with the group we are aiming at. This makes *sensus communis aestheticus* a common human capacity to transmit communication based on sensuous experiencing (Kant 1790/ 2009, 346 -347). It tries to catch other people's views and considers larger perspectives by rejecting subjective restrictions.

Discussing aesthetic experiencing in social situations requires aesthetic concepts which are based on language or other media that touches the core or the tradition of the community. The one who doesn't know the aesthetic vocabulary of the community will be left out (Kinnunen 2000, 67-68). It is typical for groups to compel their members to absorb the group norms and expect them to follow them as well. It follows that the aesthetic dimension gets socially binding. In other words you can say that socializing in a group equals with aestheticizing, i.e. embracing the aesthetic values and norms of the community. It means the ability to use aesthetic judgement in a proper way, behave as expected and sensitivity to other people's experiences.

In the paper we shall share with you a case study in which aestheticizing took place by constructing a social knowledge community on aesthetic grounds.

Following the ideas of Kant, Rafael Ramirez (1991) states that aesthetic choices may end up in social organizing. The choices Ramirez indicates are based on *sensus communis aestheticus*. It may be a question of a shared world view or felt significance of something. Ramirez studies aesthetics as a phenomenon of belonging to something and wants to comprehend why an organization seems to attract people. He discusses aesthetics in everyday situations that are guided by aesthetic experiences which people may have for an organization or a partner. It may be a matter of e.g. organizational context, symbolic landscape, significant contents, atmosphere or culture that is constantly shaped by those involved.

Ramirez (1991, 30-39) discusses what it feels like to belong to something that is bigger than oneself. He calls it the ecology of belonging. An organization is a cultural construction that sets the base for the minimum of cooperation among individuals. From the organizational viewpoint it becomes of great importance to know how those involved see their own share in the ecology of belonging. Ramirez ends up in a twofold understanding: you either feel like being a part of something, like an integral figure in a totem pole, the relational self who requires others in order to justify his/her own presence. The

totem pole is our portrayal of the concept because it is constructed out of individual figures connected to each other in an organic way.

The total opposite is “the rolling stone presence” (our depiction of being disconnected): you act as an autonomous individual who is connected to others with formal bonds only. The idea resembles Fletcher & Käufer's (2003) thinking when they distinguish relational self from individual meriting. From the aesthetic organizational perspective this opens a possibility to try to understand what it is like being a part of a collective experience or an organization, because the aesthetic component also has the power to advance receptivity among individuals.

We are discussing aesthetic belonging while studying the motivation of the group of amateurs who get involved in the museum work along with the professionals. In analyzing the social knowledge community we notice that it rests on the significant knowledge which draws on the totem pole aspect of the ecology of belonging.

## **Interaction**

In order to be comprised, *sensus communis* requires the communicative stance that forms the basis for understanding as well as the aesthetic experience. For us, interaction means the social stage of the organizational activity as a whole. We adopt a larger view on interaction by including in it ways of being together, interrelationships, atmosphere, shared processes and reactions as well as the core activity of the organization.

We understand that interaction has the power to advance or obstruct understanding. In discussing interaction we rely on two aspects of understanding in general: (1) understanding takes place by concepts or theories that are comprehended by the rational mind on individual or collective level, and (2) understanding occurs by sensual experiences that are the outcome of interpretations on individual or collective level. (Ahmas 2014, 202-203; Taylor & Ladkin 2009).

Verbal interaction may consist of rational and matter-of-fact speech or alternatively it may rest on subjective narratives or stories that touch the senses of the listener. Verbal interaction has the capacity to generate both factual and sensual understanding.

Nonverbal interaction instead leans on sensual perceptions or bodily i.e. aesthetic experiences; it creates aesthetic understanding. It is important to notice that aesthetic experiencing produces knowing that enhances interaction and interplay thus making room for social relationships.

*Sensus communis* draws on sensual experiencing that is formed and based on verbal or nonverbal interaction (Kinnunen 2000). To us sensual i.e. aesthetic experiencing means sensual knowing that is able to supplement rational knowing (Ahmas 2014).

It was noted earlier that human understanding is formed both individually and collectively. *Sensus communis* calls for collective aesthetic understanding that may rest on either verbal or nonverbal interaction (Ahmas 2014).

If and when the language (verbal or nonverbal language) used is relationally comprehended, it has the capacity to generate collective understanding. Collective relational listening (Koivunen 2003 and 2009; Koivunen & Wennes 2011, 60) may take place, which means sensual coordination into other people's rhythm or doings and willingness to receive a partner's message without prejudice. It contains the kernel of interactive sharing, openness and tolerance towards others (Parviainen 2006, 165-167; Koivunen 2005) which are combined with the totem pole idea of belonging to something. The opposite

of interactive sharing is indivisibility which in turn is connected with the strong tradition of individual meriting (Fletcher & Käufer 2003).

We cover our case with a multifaceted understanding of interaction that generates the totem pole experiences of the ecology of belonging.

## Methods

Methodologically we draw on the philosophy of relational constructivism (Hosking 2006; 2011) and action research (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) which was carried out among a group of amateurs. The empirical data was collected by the action research interventions for which Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Barrett & Shrivastva 1995) was used. Also thematic group discussions (Tengblad et. al. 2007) and thematic interviews with individual amateurs were carried out. A part of the data comes from meeting minutes, media material and field observations done by the researcher.

The data describes the experiences of the volunteers in the process with the museum. It was analyzed thematically in two processes of which the first identified the themes whereas in the second phase the data was viewed through an aesthetic lens. We found the aesthetic lens justified because the museum institution itself has an aesthetic quality and the data had a strong aesthetic emphasis. Abductive approach was conducted throughout the analysis process.

## The Significant Content

The data tells us how the members of the social knowledge community describe the activity as rewarding and rousing. The experiences uttered seem to connect with knowledge and meanings, expertise as well as the community itself. It is mostly a question of the hunger for knowing and the power of significant knowledge.

*"... it is always delightful to get a piece of knowledge about heritage ... it connects us together, because we are passionate about heritage... you know, we are hungry for history and that's what shows us the way... and then afterwards you find yourself getting wiser and wiser..."* (Anne from Wise People)

For the amateurs the contents of the shared knowledge appear to be an enchanting capital and the very core of the activity: it pulls them together them like a magnet. Any upcoming piece of heritage seems to strengthen their commitment into the activity because it keeps the interest alive. The amateurs seem to have become totally fascinated by the local heritage.

*"... we are like STASI, we are constantly fishing for heritage and local history ... like fishermen with their fishing nets... and town's people are hungry for our stories, they feast with the heritage that we can provide them with..."* (Erkki from Wise People)

Collecting intangible heritage seems to end up in a wish to be able to disseminate and share it with somebody.

*"... you have to interact, you won't get anything if you don't give to others... you can't do well if you have to keep your knowledge all to yourself, it is evident that you need to be able to share it with others ... in order to serve your community..."* (Markku from Wise People)

The wishes in turn turn into generosity. Giving and sharing becomes rewarding but also include the seed of reciprocity for the cause of equality. The principles of present giving and receiving become vital

among the amateurs as well as between “the Wise People” and the museum. The present given may be a piece of knowledge or heritage, competences or skills that end up benefiting all involved.

*“... passive members have nothing to give us... we want reciprocal performances, we want everybody to equally contribute... if you give you are going to receive as well...” (Markku from Wise People)*

It seems to us that donating your knowledge produces well-being to the subjects. The rewarding element is the notion that the piece of heritage you shared with others will further get disseminated and increase awareness of heritage in other people’s minds.

*“... the meaning of life is not just to reproduce your genome but also to reproduce the cultural heritage for the coming generations to help them to orientate in the world they are born into ...” (Erkki from Wise People)*

*“... the data we collect belongs to everybody and we feel obliged to serve our community... when I come across a piece of heritage I feel I am able to pay other people back my debts by providing them with experiences they get from my stories... because I think history and heritage belong to everybody...” (Eero from Wise People)*

The way “The Wise People” talk about donating their knowledge tells us about an aesthetic experience. What they are talking about seems to resemble the experience of being part of something that is bigger than yourself. In the core there is the significant knowledge of local heritage.

*“... this is almost like voluntary work as you are rewarded by mental well-being, it is not just about enjoying yourself... the community is a prolific group that rewards you by getting wiser every time you meet and you get the chance to be a member of the special community... it is about being a part of something that is bigger than yourself... I want to belong to a group that nourishes my hunger for heritage...” (Erkki from Wise People)*

It seems that being generous about the data rewards “the Wise People” even on a collective level. They find themselves a group that is able to serve the citizens, larger audiences and authorities. This was verified as they were asked to join certain city planning projects as local heritage experts. It indicates them the role as the local wise people. It has reshaped both the individual and the collective self-image and identity of the community. They find themselves a collective expert of local issues, “us” that avoids using “me” instead; in other words the individual agent has been replaced by a collective one. Most of all the amateurs find that their duty is providing the inhabitants with the local heritage, stories and narratives as well as have a role as the upkeepers of the lively heritage.

The data tells us that an emotional bond has been constructed between the significant knowledge content and “the Wise People”; it is manifested in their proudness of their home town. In this case it is a question of being involved in the local historical timeline. For the community members themselves collecting data equals with appreciating their home town and strengthens the feelings of belonging. In this we identify *sensus communis*, the aesthetic feeling of togetherness.

*“... if other people knew how good it is to live here, the town would soon be crowded... to me collecting the local heritage data means placing people and incidents in their proper places...by my work I want to show my respect to the local people and my own town... telling my stories to people creates heritage intersections where people can meet each other ...” (Eero from Wise People)*

In the eyes of “the Wise People” the museum appears as an expert institution of the field which makes it a desirable frame of reference as a heritage processor with whom they can share their values and goals. The choice the community members have made to collaborate with the museum seem to us to

draw on an aesthetic judgement in which both the contents and the ways of working together are found rewarding.

Even if the significant knowledge content may be subjective it offers access to individual truths. When it is complemented with the museum professional research data, the result may offer new perspectives and arguments to diversify the local understanding of heritage. It also shows how individuals and their performances complement each other like the figures in a totem pole. In other words those involved feel belonging to a group that represents something larger than the individual him/herself; this is what Ramirez means by the ecology of belonging. Additionally collective relational listening takes place as the members are tuned into sensual coordination with each other in doings, meanings and thoughts.

*"... you can almost hear what the other members think... you don't need to say it out loud, we still understand what you mean... it feels like coming home, but there is always something new to replenish your knowledge stock when you leave..."* (Eero from Wise People)

"The Wise People" make a relational community that shapes its own reality and creates its own worldview in close collaboration with the museum. They set the mutual norms and agreed procedures which make it easy for new members to join as long as they have a common language, shared interests and people are tuned accordingly.

In the data we identify "The Wise People" talking about individually experienced meanings that go beyond rational, instrumental or logical implications. The experienced meanings draw on sensual or bodily responses of which individuals make aesthetic interpretations. They are connected with the subjective conception of the world, their values, norms and approaches. In the case of "the Wise People" the focus lies on the significant knowledge contents to which are emotionally bonded.

## Conclusion

The theory of the ecology of belonging combined with our data seems to give an aesthetic reasoning to the long term partnership between the amateurs and the museum. The rewarding experiences of the participants are connected with situational and individual meanings that are loaded with aesthetic judgements. This explains that organizing is driven by gratifying, i.e. aesthetic experiences. The amateurs find the knowledge content itself rewarding which allures them to connect with the museum in the heritage collaboration because they are both motivated by the same goals. The narrative nature of the work also reflects the yearning for experiencing that our present experience economy is loaded with.

The feeling of togetherness with the museum is aesthetic by nature, the museum turns into a home. The individually rewarding experience is disseminated to others to whom those involved describe the aesthetic experience of *sensus communis*. To the participants it gives a feeling of being a part of something bigger than oneself, in other words it is a case of the ecology of belonging.

The rewarding knowledge content generates feelings of proudness of the hometown. It rises from the passionate and committed personal relationship that is typical of amateurs. This in turn builds emotional bonds and strongly connecting linkages among the group members which make it a relationally normed community. The collective expert identity is constructed socially and draws on the concept of "the Wise People" which also has in some cases reconstructed individual identities by generating existential makeovers.

To conclude the case we suggest that organizing takes place by aesthetic choices the participants make following the idea of *sensus communis*. In our case the significant content constructs the aesthetic element which is grounded on rewarding experiences, interaction, sharing and open expertise.

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## BeWeDō®: Co-creating possibilities with movement

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### ABSTRACT

At the core of the BeWeDō® Workshop Series are movement practices inspired by the Japanese martial art of Aikidō, however, participants do not learn Aikidō. Instead, BeWeDō® involves one specific Aikidō movement exercise – *tai no henko* – which offers participants a progressive motion-led interactive experience engagement designed to explore, feel, develop and express the relational leadership skills required to generate co-creative possibilities with others in organizational life.

In the paper I critically reflect on the six key themes that emerged from two field studies exploring the BeWeDō® Workshop Series experience engagement: Aikidō is not BeWeDō®; BeWeDō® is more than collaboration; Aiki involves “the two of us”; an aiki approach invites co-operation; BeWeDō® positions the body to lead co-creative movement; and BeWeDō® moves the conversation to a different place.

### Keywords

Leadership development; Co-creation; Aikidō; Relational leadership; Ethnography; BeWeDō®.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Creative practice in the Japanese martial art of Aikidō is an emerging event, which involves constantly reassessing one’s situation and priorities by moving co-creatively with others – engaging the mind and body – to generate co-operative strategies from a variety of positions. This research (Bradford, 2015) is the first to investigate how movement practices from the Japanese martial art of Aikidō can facilitate leadership development for co-creation. The BeWeDō® Workshop Series provided compelling experiences of a relational leadership process which encouraged participants to be in the moment and generate co-creative movement.

## 2. BACKGROUND

It was motivational for me as a designer and aikidoka (a practitioner of Aikidō) to realise that there were as many reasons for practicing Aikidō as there were Aikidō practitioners. Over the years, I have found the Aikidō dōjō an inspirational place for learning a new creative “Way.” For example, the dōjō is a collaborative context for the transformation of the self in relation with others through interaction and action. Aikidō encouraged me to reframe how I understood the process of designing: to view the dynamic tension I had often experienced during creative initiatives as an opportunity for generating co-creative relationships. The realisation of this way is through embracing Aikidō principles and processes, which offer a way of being, way of acting, a creative practice for participating in the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The term experience economy was first introduced by Pine and Gilmore to describe how society has evolved from an agrarian economy, to an industrial economy, which in turn was superseded by the service economy, to today to what they call the experience economy. The article argued that, service companies would evolve from simply providing a service to creating memorable events for their customers, with the memory of the experience becoming the product. According to my Aikidō instructor Sensei Richard Halson (5th Dan) in an interview (Bradford, 2011), Aikidō is an excellent example of a memorable experience because

when you first come in a dōjō you can’t see anything – you’re seeing too much – by the time you come out of the dōjō you’re focussed. . . . Through a remarkably gentle sort of thing you’re opening people, you’re opening their minds to something that’s completely different. (pp. 414-415)

From a leadership development perspective, Aikidō engages the whole person – both mind and body – and encourages aikidoka to transfer practices learnt in the dōjō into other off-the-mat life domains (Saotome, 1993; K. Ueshiba, 1984; M. Ueshiba, 2002; M. Ueshiba & Stevens, 1993). Being knowledgeable is no longer enough; you choose your future when you act and perform in new Ways – you are what you practice. Practicing Aikidō is transformative in terms of providing embodied knowledge which is immediately available, responsive, and a collaborative approach to creative thinking through a collective social process. Embodied practices, such as Aikidō, are a creative commitment by aikidoka to a generative practice offering understandings, knowledge, and orientations transferable across disciplinary boundaries. The purpose of this research was to explore the interdependence between aikidoka, leadership development, and creative modes of practice – processes *in action* – to explore what process leadership skills are required for focussing collective creativity in the context of co-creation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008) within the experience economy. Co-creation is a specific collaborative event shared by two or more people, whereby ideas and experiences are exchanged to create something not known in advance.

## 3. METHODS

This design-led ethnography was a two phased participatory inquiry (Heron & Reason, 1997) where experiential knowing – combining autoethnography and visual ethnography – involved engaging the body and its experiences as a site of learning and a multisensory way of knowing. The findings from Phase One identified four concepts which were synthesised into the BeWeDō® conceptual framework (see Figure 1): a unique co-creation experience innovation.

This paper focuses on Phase Two where the BeWeDō® framework was investigated experientially – to analyse patterns and themes emerging between the researcher and participants and the role of metaphors – in two field studies and semi-structured interviews with participants (immediately following the field studies and 1 and 3 months afterwards). In the following sections the six key themes that emerged will be discussed.

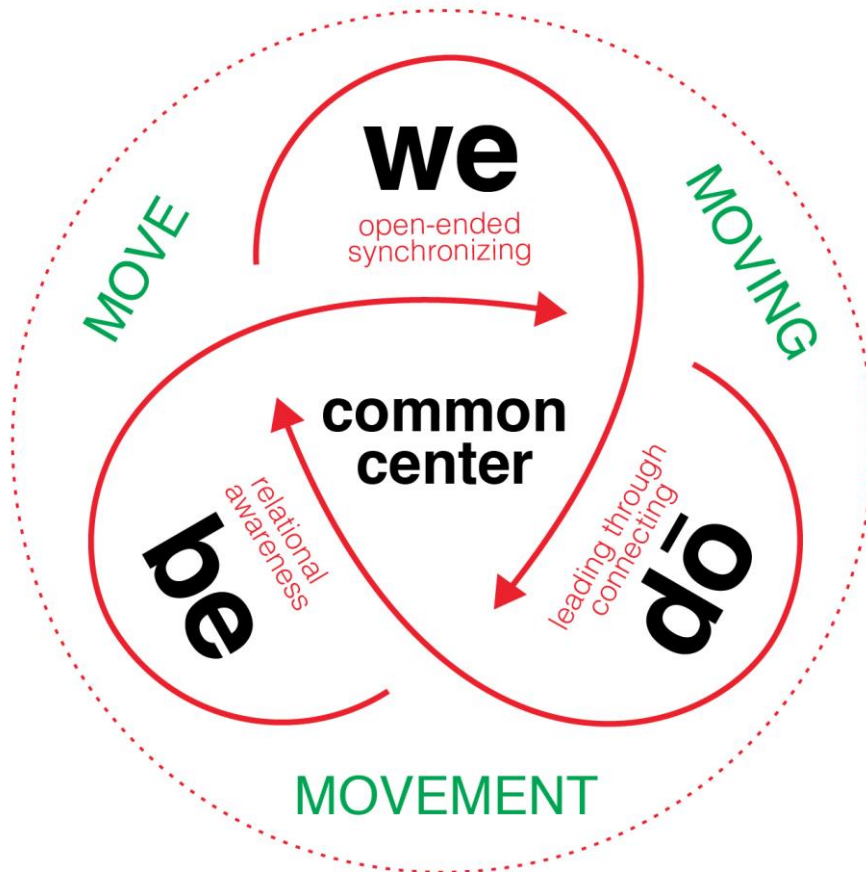


Figure 1. The BeWeDō® framework.

#### 4. THE BeWeDō® WORKSHOP SERIES

##### 4.1. The BeWeDō® field studies

The Workshop Series ran over a period of 3 hours, in two sessions, and involved between 6 to 20 participants and allowed for one-to-one interactions between the participants and myself. The workshop rooms/spaces were informal and open with no furnishings. These field studies were the first opportunity for people to experience the BeWeDō® framework.

A number of guidelines were important in the field studies to facilitate leadership development for co-creation. As the BeWeDō® approach is a participatory inquiry, the workshops involved me both *shaping and being shaped* based upon active, hands-on participation. I facilitated the workshops according to the following four guidelines: (1) full participation of everyone attending the workshop; (2) participants engaged in a process of learning the Aikidō movement practice of *tai no henko* (see Figure 2); (3) participants practice *tai no henko* with a range of other participants; and (4) the experience should be engaging and fun. Full participation was essential, as the BeWeDō® know-how is in the movement. Participants did not need any prior experience in martial arts to undertake the workshop. Participants experience the progressive movements of *tai no henko* – *kihon*, *ki no nagare*, and then *reppo* – in order to experience what they could potentially mean for co-creation in collective creativity (see Table 1). During the process of *tai no henko*, instead of engaging in struggle and competition, participants communicate – in both the physical and mental sense – with the movement of their partner.



Figure 2. *Tai no henko*. Video still: Mon Patel.

#### 4.2. Tai no henko

Tai no henko is a movement exercise regularly performed in pairs at the start of an Aikidō class (Pranin, 1991). The decision to use tai no henko to inform the BeWeDō® Workshop Series experience for participants was for two reasons. Firstly, it is both a fundamental and foundational Aikidō blending practice. It is fundamental because it teaches some of the basic moves that all aikidoka are required to learn in keiko: '*irimi*' – an act or movement to enter (step) inward towards your partner, '*tenkan*' – a pivot turn or movement of 180 degrees often executed as part of a technique, and '*tenshin*' – a sweeping body turn. It is foundational as it represents the basis of more complex and advanced Aikidō techniques. Secondly, I was inspired after watching an Aikidō video by Sensei Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros and Sensei Carolina van Haperen (Takemusu Aikido Netherlands, 2008, April 4), in which they demonstrated three levels of tai no henko. This clear articulation of three phases involved in tai no henko reinforced the essence of my BeWeDō® framework as a progressive motion-led embodied knowing, which could be utilised to facilitate reflection on relational leadership development for co-creation through movement.

#### 4.3. The BeWeDō® Workshop Series approach

The BeWeDō® Workshop Series approach was not a 'sitting around writing things on pieces of paper' kind of workshop (see Tables 2, 3). It was a living, being, kind of experience that encouraged participants to *be in the moment* and generate co-creative *movement*. Each BeWeDō® workshop Series involved two sessions of 1.5 hours.

Table 1: The three phases of tai no henko.

Tai no henko
<p>Tai no henko is not an Aikidō technique as such: it is a body movement exercise (<i>Sabaki</i>) where aikidoka move their body to a more desirable position.</p>
<p><b>Phase 1: Kihon</b></p> <p>Basic body change or shift. A blending practice performed in pairs, which begins by assuming a basic triangular body stance called <i>hamni</i>. Kihon begins when you offer your hand and your partner gains your attention by firmly grabbing your wrist (same-side grip) and holding you in place. You then slide your front foot forward offline ('Aikidō 101: don't be there') away from the point of contact – entering through <i>irimi</i> – and with your hands in front of you, <i>tenkan</i> by blending that movement in relation to your partner by sliding your rear foot around through a turning action of 180 degrees and end up next to your partner. You should end up being connected at the wrist, shoulder-to-shoulder, while facing the same direction as your partner. Both partners should take turns working both left and right sides.</p>
<p><b>Phase 2: Ki no nagare</b></p> <p>Energy flow. A blending practice performed in pairs, which begins by assuming <i>hamni</i>. In contrast to kihon, ki no nagare begins when you offer your hand and your partner moves towards you and tries to grab your wrist (same-side). In response – while in motion – you welcome their movement and “on the touch” (as their hand is about to lightly touch your wrist) move by entering through <i>irimi</i> then <i>tenshin</i> by matching the speed at your partner is entering by turning to face the same direction, shoulder-to-shoulder with your partner. Both partners should take turns working both left and right sides.</p>
<p><b>Phase 3: Reppo</b></p> <p>Changing direction. A blending practice performed in pairs, which begins by assuming <i>hamni</i>. As in ki no nagare, reppo begins when you offer your hand and your partner moves towards you and tries to grab your wrist (same-side). In response – while in motion – you welcome their movement and “on the touch” (offering hand) by entering through <i>irimi</i> then <i>tenshin</i> then <i>tenkan</i> (180 degrees turn) then <i>tenshin</i> then <i>tenkan</i> (180 degrees turn) on one central axis by matching the speed at which your partner is entering. You should end up back in <i>hamni</i>. This very circular version of tai no henko can alternatively be done by “on the touch” (offering hand) by entering through <i>irimi</i> then <i>tenshin</i> then <i>tenkan</i> (180 degrees turn), then using a basic foot movement called <i>ayumi</i> move forward in a walking motion shoulder-to-shoulder with your partner with your hands connected in front of you. In this version you can either end up facing the same direction as your partner, or back in <i>hamni</i>. Both partners should take turns working both left and right sides.</p>
<p>Based on (Pranin, 1991; K. Ueshiba, 2002).</p>

Table 2: The BeWeDō® Workshop Series session 01.

Metaphors	<b>SESSION 01</b> (90 minutes)
<p>Aikidō 101 Rubber band Chocolate</p>	<p>The first session of the workshop starts with participants standing in a circle. The Workshop facilitator then briefly introduces participants to Aikidō, the research question (How can Aikidō movement practices facilitate leadership development for co-creation?). This is followed by video demonstrating the three phases of tai no henko and the associated <i>Be</i>, <i>We</i>, <i>Dō</i> concepts as part of the BeWeDō® framework. [10 minutes]</p> <p>Next, participants undertake two types of warm-up exercises. First, a range of exercises intended to stretch the body. Second, a specialised Workshop ‘walking exercise’ that aims to loosen the body and mind. The <i>walking exercise</i> is a fast and lively experience where the participant group start by slowly walking around the room in random patterns trying to avoid each other. After a short time the pace increases until they are walking extremely quickly and have to start using physical gestures to avoid each other. This exercise is an interactive icebreaker activity which is used to warm-up and introduce participants to each other at strategic times throughout the Workshops. The process is also being in the moment and a fun way to reinforce Saitome’s (1989) point that Aikidō movements such as irimi and tenkan are used by people in everyday life without thinking. [5 minutes]</p> <p>The session then unfolds with all participants in pairs engaging in a process of learning the three phases of tai no henko. Over the three phases participants practice with a range of other participants (change partners twice in each phase). As the movement practices become increasingly demanding participants learn how to ‘connect’ and develop ‘trust’ with each other:</p> <p><b>Tai no henko</b>  <b>Be</b>                      <b>Phase 1: Kihon</b> [15 minutes]  <b>We</b>                     <b>Phase 2: Ki no nagare</b> [15 minutes]  <b>Dō</b>                     <b>Phase 3: Reppo</b> [15 minutes]</p> <p>Group discussion: Participants form a circle and reflect on their experiences. [25 minutes]</p> <p>Closing comments. [5 minutes]</p>



Table 3: The BeWeDō® Workshop Series session 02.

Concepts & Metaphors	SESSION 02 (90 minutes)
Aikidō 101 Rubber band Chocolate	<p>The second session of the workshop starts with participants standing in a circle. The Workshop facilitator then introduces participants to the Aikidō principle of Aiki, co-creation, and the core BeWeDō® concept of <i>common center</i>. [5 minutes]</p> <p>Next, participants undertake two types of warm-up exercises. First, a range of exercises intended to stretch the body. Second, a specialised BeWeDō® walking exercise. [5 minutes]</p> <p><b>Tai no henko</b> (All participants form pairs)  <b>Be</b>            <b>Phase 1: Kihon</b> [5 minutes]  <b>We</b>            <b>Phase 2: Ki no nagare</b> [5 minutes]  <b>Dō</b>            <b>Phase 3: Reppo</b> [5 minutes]</p>
<b>BeWeDō®</b> <b>Common center</b> Aikidō 101 Rubber band Chocolate Work area	<p>Participants to silently think of a work issue to discuss. This becomes the work area that participants will connect through. [3 minutes]</p> <p>The Workshop facilitator then demonstrates to the group how to <i>lead ... the movement</i> of a conversation in co-creation using BeWeDō®:  <b>Kihon</b>: used by listener to lead the process of asking the speaker a question. This could range from a simple question to clarify details about the situation, through to questions that <i>move</i> the conversation such as “have you thought about it this way?”  <b>Ki no nagare</b>: used by the speaker to lead a conversation in a new direction, or to connect with a specific listener to engage them in them in <i>moving</i> a conversation in a new direction.  <b>Reppo</b>: when a listener has an idea or response to the issue/challenge they lead the speaker to – “here’s another way to think about it” – a different <i>movement</i> enabling position or place. [7 minutes]</p>
<b>Common center</b> Work area	<p>All participants (+facilitator) form pairs and utilise BeWeDō® framework to discuss each other’s topic. Walking exercise. [10 minutes. Repeat]</p> <p>Group discussion: Participants form a circle and reflect on their experiences. [20 minutes]</p> <p>Closing comments. [5 minutes]</p>



## 5. KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THE BeWeDō® WORKSHOP SERIES

What follows is a discussion of the six key themes that emerged from the BeWeDō® Workshop Series and interviews carried out with the participants post field studies.

### 5.1. Theme 1: Aikidō is not BeWeDō®

At the core of the BeWeDō® framework are Aikidō inspired movement practices, however, I did not teach participants Aikidō. Aikidō is a Japanese martial art, and the Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō is a formal training place for people to engage in a collective process for learning and transformation. Traditionally, a dōjō has the shomen (focal point) with an area displaying a framed photo of the founder of O'Sensei, calligraphy, or other artifacts. There is a clear hierarchy within the dōjō which is communicated to a community of practice through etiquette, rituals, and clothing. For Kisshomaru Ueshiba (2002) the purpose of Aikidō is to forge the body and mind and to build a persons character. Keiko is diverse, consisting of about 50 fundamental and basic self-defense techniques for throwing and pinning (as well as techniques with weapons), and the first thing aikidoka learn at the dōjō is how to fall or roll safely. Once the basic techniques are learned, and the principles of Aikidō understood, the number of applications is limitless. Instead, the BeWeDō® framework uses one specific Aikidō movement practice – tai no henko – and focuses on how to utilise this exercise to facilitate leadership development for co-creation.

BeWeDō® is a unique conceptual framework and in contrast to the Aikidō Shinryukan dōjō, the BeWeDō® Workshop Series occurred at informal spaces, temporarily located within collaborating organisations. I facilitated both the BeWeDō® field studies and participants needed no prior experience in martial arts. The atmosphere was designed to be relaxing and participants were asked to bring comfortable exercise clothing. The three phases of tai no henko (kihon, ki no nagare, and reppo) utilised in the BeWeDō® framework involve timing, distancing, and blending one's movement with that of another participant through turning 180 degrees. As a cumulative motion-led embodied knowing, the BeWeDō® approach offered me – as a design researcher – new relational leadership understandings and orientation for co-creation. The findings supports previous research (Adler, 2006; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) validating the exchange of ideas between the arts – a more holistic way of approaching and engaging within leadership contexts in the contemporary era. For example, after engaging with the BeWeDō® framework over one Workshop Series, Liz reflected on how she saw a challenge she was facing at work in a different way:

So one of our organisation's biggest challenges is actually communicating what it does or like what it is. People find it *really* hard to understand what our organisation is usually. We've had huge challenges, and I'm part of the team that is going to build a new website for our organisation, and so there's this communication challenge of how do we tell people what it is and I can see, I mean our organisation being movement. . , like what is that initial move that you, like what's that spark that you get in people's minds about it.

In other words, a 'dōjō' itself is not necessary to practice Aikidō (M. Ueshiba, 2002). Specifically, Aikidō movement practices are patterns of embodied activity, which can provide compelling experiences of a relational leadership process beyond aikidoka on-the-mat to anybody interested in learning how to lead co-creative movement off-the-mat (see Figure 3). While I acknowledge Seiser's (2005) point that stepping outside the dōjō and trying to translate Aikidō knowledge is difficult, BeWeDō® set out with the aim of involving people harmoniously in the co-creation process using aiki principles (M. Ueshiba, 2010). The current findings add to Adler's (2006) position that arts-based methods are not simply

about motivating people – the BeWeDō® approach offers leadership development opportunities by providing an experience engagement which inspires people to *connect with* and *move toward* more desirable possibilities.



Figure 3. The BeWeDō® framework. (5,12/9/2014). Photo: Chelsea Robinson.

## 5.2. Theme 2: BeWeDō® is more than collaboration

While collaboration is required initially to learn the Aikidō movement practices, on its own it is not enough to facilitate leadership development for co-creation through the BeWeDō® framework. As discussed earlier, tai no henko is, in itself, not an Aikidō technique: it is a basic exercise where a participant gains the attention of their partner by moving towards them and connecting through firmly grabbing their wrist; and by blending that movement in relation to another participant through a turning action of 180 degrees. A common view amongst participants of the value of the exercise was in terms of “pairing. . . , working with a range of people” (Tim), “different body sizes. . . , different ways you relate to each other” (Yvonne), and Julia commented that the movement practices put

you into a different mindset than having a chat over a cup of coffee or sitting at your desk having a conversation. [pause] it allows the conversations to go and happen in a different way. . . , Your comment is going to take the discussion somewhere.”

Basically, collaboration differs from co-creation. Steve alluded to how the BeWeDō® framework was an “invitation to look at and know problems from a different context” (see Figure 4). For Sanders and Simon (2009) co-creation “is a special case of collaboration where the intent is to create something that is not known in advance” (para. 3). As a movement practice, tai no henko not only involves connection, but also trust. Without *trust* you cannot train in Aikidō (Saotome, 1989). This research explored creative practices such as Aikidō Shinryukan, where the experience engagement through careful staging of *how* we learn – involves building participative relationships to co-create value. The BeWeDō® framework, through a shared common participation (Bruner, 1986), offered all participants a multi-relational frame of knowing that extended beyond tai no henko. Furthermore, the experience

of blending with your partner was about embracing a *moving perspective* – “it just kinda flowed from there. . . , and we just kept talking and it grows and all that [moves hands & arms in circles to demonstrate]. It was a good starting point [demonstrates with her body] and then let’s go for it” (Liz). This view was echoed by Kelvin who enjoyed the serendipity occurring at times:

there’s no like ‘jumping in’ on like the conversation, it’s like whoever grabs the arm first [group laughter]. It’s like that person’s got an idea and step back and see that discussion evolve and then maybe someone else grabs someone else’s arm.



Figure 4. The BeWeDō® framework involves a respectful engagement with others. (9/7/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

As an experiential stage the BeWeDō® approach is a model for performance that advances possibilities for new viewing points involving co-creative action beyond the self (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 2011). For Saposnek (1980) aikidoka are very much like teachers, and aim to send partners away wiser for their experiences together. Similarly during the BeWeDō® field study 1, the initial movement of connecting with your partner by grabbing their wrist was seen as similar to “setting up people for success” (Tim) in a work context.

### 5.3. Theme 3: Aiki involves “the two of us”

The *intent* Sanders and Simon (2009) refer to involves acts of collective creativity, which are shared by two or more people (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). In aiki this also involves the coming together, blending or union of mind and body. From a relational leadership perspective aiki includes self-awareness, effective body movements, calmness and a sense of co-operativeness: a respectful engagement with others. A recurrent theme emerging from the field studies was a clear sense amongst participants of the importance of relationships (see Figure 5) within the BeWeDō® framework – it was a process they “could do it easily with anyone else” (Julia).



Figure 5. Workshop participants connecting with their partners. (12/9/2014). Video still: Mon Patel.

Kelvin also felt “it was really interesting how it worked in a group, as opposed to and in contrast to the one-on-ones. Instead of one person that’s got your back three people have got your back.” Ross reflected, based on his previous experience training in kendo, that kendo, Aikidō and BeWeDō® had a similar dynamic based on distance (in Aikidō this is called *ma-ai*): “the correlation between two people, was something that I hadn’t really thought of in a business and design context, and for me that made a lot of sense, that dynamic teaching.” Alex commented that the BeWeDō® approach to relationships was very different to what he was used to in the workplaces where he always ended up trying to fix everything/everyone:

I think there was something interesting that I can’t kinda describe that was just about the relationship of the partner approach. That it wasn’t us, and it wasn’t me, it was *the two of us*. . . , It was just interesting that two people could work together to sort of mutually develop and then experiment, and that person could change.

In BeWeDō® relationships are understood both relationally and experientially. For Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) relational leaders understand the importance of building trust, the creative nature of dialogue, and the “always-emerging nature of leading” (p. 1438). Participants come to this awareness in BeWeDō® through the practical effects of participating using their bodies to learn with movement. I also discovered during the BeWeDō® field study 2, that participants enjoyed self-organising into larger groups of three and four (see Figures 7, 8). The arts-based approach gives participants access to more presentational methods of knowing (Heron & Reason, 1997) – knowledge generated by, and communicated through our embodied, felt experiences with others. For Morihei Ueshiba (2010):

True harmony  
Is much more  
Than a written term or spoken phrase  
Don’t endlessly discuss it –  
Learn how to make it really happen! (p. 115)

#### 5.4. Theme 4: An aiki approach invites co-operation



The tai no henko movement practices are an excellent example of relational leadership in action. Even before you move to connect with your partner by grabbing their wrist you must assume Hamni – a basic triangular working stance (see Figure 6). In Aikidō a good stance reflects an *attitude* or a proper state of mind (Stevens, 1995; K. Ueshiba, 2002) that is relaxed and ready. When the hand is offered in tai no henko kihon it is an open hand (not a fist), which signals to your partner that ‘I’m not hiding anything.’ In tai no henko ki no nagare when you offer your hand it is a signal to your partner that you will move ‘once they are ready.’ The movement to connect with your partner by grabbing their wrist means ‘I have to connect’ – in the overlapping space directly in front of you metaphorically referred to as a ‘work area’ – and is the first communication we have with our practice partner in the BeWeDō® framework.



Figure 6. Offering your hand in tai no henko. (12/9/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

In his account of BeWeDō®, Tim describes how he approached his co-creation session with Liz:

I think there was a moment where we were trying to resolve what are we doing now or how are we gonna do this exactly. And we sort of looked round, other people were in a similar state, and I think we both sort of said, ‘well, let’s just try doing what we were doing with this new thing’ . . . , like with this extra layer. Because we’d been layering up so far, and we could talk face to face about our problems, but I think my sense was that I’ve done that before, let’s just try a new configuration and if it’s bad we can just default back to the old conversation.

Later, he reflected on the process and said he found it “unusual and kind of surprising, in a good way, was, the idea of attacking someone with my problem cos it’s kind of like an analogue to bringing.” Liz recalled that when Tim brought her problem

initially, when we were doing it, and I was like ‘Tim, tell me your problem,’ and I grabbed his hand and I was like ‘No, that’s not the right way. You’re coming to me with a problem, so you have to grab my hand.’ Or something. . . , we had to figure who’s coming to who. So I think we played around with that and thought of what was right.

Describing the same event Tim remembered

the first way that we tried it was, Liz attacked me as I presented my question, and then we tried the movement and that didn't feel quite right, so we actually found ourselves asking the same question but trying different movements, while doing that. And I think we ended up settling on the person, bringing the question or the challenge is the person attacking, and so we did, we did one the other way where like you're being attacked as being asked a question, and then we tried the other way and then we just stuck with that because it felt like it made sense.

Through the BeWeDō® movement practices individuals are constituted by their relations, and more specifically the relational processes which enable leadership. Essentially, leadership is developed through interactions – between leaders *and* followers – within dynamic social processes (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). Participants found that when the hand is offered in tai no henko, this *act* (see Figure 6) represented an embodied commitment by someone to *lead ... the movement* towards collaboration and partnership through collective creativity. The BeWeDō® framework is an aiki approach which moves beyond collaboration and invites cooperation through a non-verbal performance involving both the mind and body. My participation as a designer researcher as part of the BeWeDō® experience was also acknowledged by participants. For Megan, this was useful:

at times when we kind of got stuck on how we should be moving and talking and stuff – you were around to give that input and, kind of, you did it for us and so sent us off in the right track. . , we were just standing there talking. And I think that was when you came along and showed us how we could actually use the processes as ways of changing perspective, and the movements, and how they could facilitate that discussion – as opposed to just standing there talking to each other.

Damian enjoyed the BeWeDō® approach because

you had to fully engage in what you were doing because you were paying attention to the other person. Often your mind is not there, you're thinking about so many different things but in that conversation it was just one way. Like, I was listening to you or you were listening to me.

Sanders and Stappers (2012) maintain that face-to-face communication is essential in co-creation as it builds empathy between co-creators. As a design researcher it was fascinating to observe the BeWeDō® Workshop participants self-organise themselves during the co-creation session in field study 2 from pairs into groups of three and four (see Figures 7, 8). Participants appeared to enjoy these serendipitous events with Kelvin reporting that “it was cool because I guess that's the perfect example of where two heads are better than one and four heads are better than two.” For Levine (2013), the essence of an aiki experience requires a shift from an individual-centered perspective to a joint practice where you connect with your partner during processes of mutual communication. Developing the ability to engage effectively with a range of people is an essential Aikidō leadership principle that can be used off-the-mat in collective creativity – the connection leads the movement.



Figure 7. Workshop participants working in groups of three. (12/9/2014). Video stills: Mon Patel.



Figure 8. Workshop participants working in groups of four. (12/9/2014). Video stills: Mon Patel.



Figure 9. Moving from conversation to conversation. (12/9/2014). Video still: Mon Patel.

In keeping with Sanders and Simons's (2009) notion of co-creation as "a special case of collaboration

where the intent is to create something that is not known in advance” (para. 3), I successfully explored more aiki ways of thinking about leadership development by moving participants from conversation to conversation (see Figure 9) during field study 2. All participants experienced that leadership was co-created back-and-forth in dynamic relational interactions between the individual and the collective. The results of this research complimented those of earlier post-heroic leadership studies (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010; Gagon, Vough, & Nickerson, 2012; Koivunen & Wennes, 2011; Roberts & Coghlan, 2011; Schyns, Tymon, Kiefer, & Kerschreiter, 2013; Uhl-Bien, 2006) that suggest focussing on the processes, practices and the social flow of interacting and connecting – rather than individualistic leader development – for changeable contemporary contexts such the experience economy. My exploration reinforced Morihei Ueshiba’s (2010) belief that an aiki approach can be seen as a compass pointing us in the right direction.

### **5.5. Theme 5: BeWeDō® positions the body to lead co-creative movement**

The BeWeDō® framework is an invitation to *co-create possibilities* and that leadership development practices do not exist within an individual leader – rather, embodied BeWeDō® movement practices *lead* to co-creation. For Tim, weaving conversation in to the movements was the experience he most enjoyed:

what was interesting was having Liz grab my arm and turn me physically, at the same time as she was presenting a perspective that I hadn’t considered, a piece of information I didn’t know. And as she was doing that, she turned me so that she was standing next to me, and we were both facing in the same direction and there was some sort of like kinaesthetic ‘a-ha’ which was different to just a conversational thing. I think I felt more heard and it might have been the physical contact, and I felt more heard because she ended up standing in my shoes facing the same direction – that’s kind of how it felt.”

During the same interaction, Liz expressed:

I was *amazed* at how easy the conversation flowed. Yeah, I mean Tim and I had an *awesome* conversation. . . , I was like, okay let me come onto your side and think about it from there, have you tried this, and let me take you around and think about this problem together sort of thing.

For Tim it was a little unusual to have physical contact with another person while talking to them: “sometimes we ended up standing in the same direction in the finishing position with someone holding someone else’s arm while we were still talking. And that was a little bit odd, but it was okay cos we’d been in that sort of physical space.” In Liz’s opinion, when Tim was moving with her during tai no henko, “that’s where the leadership thing comes in somehow. Yeah. But I also liked how doing that physical activity like broke the ice somehow, and it was like just natural to move on to focusing on a problem or something.” The BeWeDō® framework offered an arts-based approach which Taylor and Ladkin (2009) would argue provided participants with the experience of an embodied strategy – a *felt sense* – for how to engage with others in leadership situations. For Strozzi-Heckler (2007), Aikidō movement practices offer an embodied way of learning to move fluidly within a leadership context.





Figure 10. The BeWeDō® framework involves connection and trust. (12/9/2014). Photo: Mon Patel.

As an interface, Aikidō is a Way of moving to *enable* co-creative possibilities (see Figure 10). BeWeDō® movement practices are the connection that *leads* co-creative relationships. There was a sense amongst participants of the value of the interactions during the co-creation field study sessions. For Pat it was the discussions and *switching partners* towards the end “to get different ideas and approach it with different people.” Several participants found being in *side by side* position was very powerful, and it meant that “if I speak to you *next to you* – it’s not as confronting and if I speak directly *to you*, you have the potential to move away or something” (Damian). Julia enjoyed how the BeWeDō® framework put you into “a different mindset than having a chat over a cup of coffee or sitting at your desk having a conversation.” It encouraged her think about what she was going to say before jumping into a conversation, because her comment would take the discussion somewhere. As Pat put it: “spinning people round both literally and figuratively just changes our way of relating to one another.” For Dobson (1994) Aikidō movement practices are like dancing:

The more time and energy you spend on learning the steps, the less you’ll enjoy the dance. At the same time, if you don’t know the steps and you’re all enjoyment, you’re not very artistic. In approaching the art, each of us has to balance learning the steps and enjoying the music. . . . later, it’s important to know that the music is critical, too. Just feel the music and get into the feeling of the throw without worrying about the disparate parts. Participate in the flow. Eventually, you have to cut loose of the techniques and let yourself go. To do that is scary. (p. 87)

Embodied practices, such as BeWeDō®, offer understandings, knowledge and orientations that can transmigrate across boundaries (Warde, 2005). I found the interplay between my practical, personal, and participatory field experiences alongside participants during BeWeDō® a useful way to understand embodiment as a *practicing space* (Freiler, 2008) – an *interactive experience* responding to Sanders’ (2005) call for co-creating spaces where designers and everyday people work together with a focus on the co-creation process.

## 5.6. Theme 6: BeWeDō® moves the conversation to a different place

Within the BeWeDō® framework knowing emerges through physical movement. As Megan put it:

Yeah, I liked how the movements represented the conversations. . . , the connecting, and then going into another space which actually physically represents a change of direction in the conversation and new perspectives. I thought that was a very cool way of doing it.

The “going into another space” and “change of direction” is enabled by tai no henko reppo, where you offer your hand, your partner connects by grabbing the wrist, and with both hands in front you have the freedom to adapt, improvise and move your ‘work area’ through circular, spiral and semi-spiral movement practices.

For example, Pat describes a co-creation moment when he and Kelvin were talking:

I think we’d moved once or twice and had a conversation and it was sort of – it didn’t feel like it was radically changing or you know, certain things I was saying weren’t coming across in the way that I thought they were going to come across, so that was that was when I decided to not just spin around in that area that we were in but to actually move more around the room. So I guess we’d gone from almost under the slide and by the window to the bench, which was where the original conversation was happening and we spun around to where the big green table was and I’d orientated Kelvin to be looking out of the big window. So when you think about the physical space, we’d gone from quite enclosed to an almost open landscape and looking out of a really high ceilinged wall at green trees and blue sky. Yeah, a very different perspective. . . , very different stimulus. Like, immediately the conversation started to shift.

From Kelvin’s perspective, Pat

was quite deliberate with what he was turning you to face and drawing inspiration from – buildings, and blue sky, and trees. I liked that you just might see something from a different perspective regardless of where you move to. It just represents that change in the conversation – like the pivots in a validation board. It physically represents those changing perspectives. Looking at it from a different angle.

BeWeDō® research contributes to existing knowledge by extending beyond the more individualistic notion of embodiment, and considers how emplacement (Howes, 2005) informs our understanding of “the body as one that knows and learns in movement” (Pink, 2011, p. 354). The spontaneous movement created by combining tai no henko kihon, ki no nagare, and reppo within the BeWeDō® framework is an example of a generative practice: we co-create possibilities with movement.

I remember it wasn’t like – one person and then everyone’s thought about it and then it was another person. . . , it liked rolled on. One person would say something and then another person would say something – it was like sparking these ideas for other people to have input and I was like ‘whoa I need to get a second to process.’ But it like, worked, it made sense. (Kelvin)

Participants also commented on how the BeWeDō® framework differed from their normal work conversations, and pondered how they could incorporate more movement in their workplaces or

to actually try and design the space and how we relate as much as the content of the meeting itself. [pause] getting up and physically moving and connecting with someone. . . , there’s also the visual stimulus and sights, smells, sounds – all that sort of stuff going on as well when you move someone” (Pat).

Building on Ingold’s (2000, 2007) work on movement, Pink’s (2011) notion of emplacement suggests that the senses, human perception and place also offer new ways of understanding what she refers to

as a *place-event* – “an intensity or nexus of things, in process and in relation to each other” (p. 349). For participants the BeWeDō® approach was more than simply an embodied experience. Perceiving, sensing bodies learn through unfolding sequential movement practices within complex environments (Howes, 2005). As an interactive experience BeWeDō® offered co-creative possibilities for participants with movement from place to place (see Figure 11).

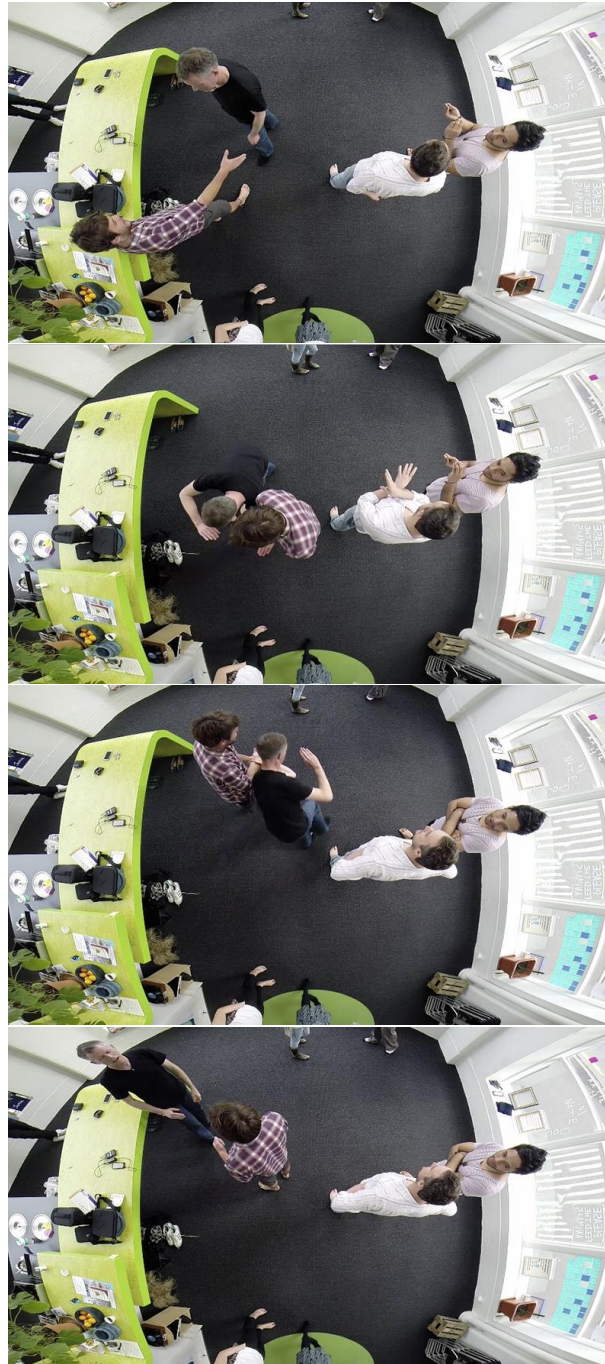


Figure 11. BeWeDō® moves the conversation to a different place. (12/9/2014). Video stills: Mon Patel. Also see: <https://vimeo.com/172867448>

## 6. Conclusions and future directions

There are opportunities for extending the BeWeDō® framework research in several ways in the future.

Firstly, there is potential for this research to investigate my new role as a BeWeDō® practitioner, responding to Uhl-Bien and Ospina's (2012) call for more studies of relational leadership from an interdisciplinary perspective. As a co-creation researcher, I would relish the opportunity to explore Howes (2005) notion of the *body-mind-environment*, the longitudinal effects of *emplacement* (Pink, 2011), and how these build on my emergent understanding of "the body as one that knows and learns in movement" (p. 354). Secondly, as a Dō – BeWeDō® is a way of 'living' co-creation: a mindset placing participants on a common ground, along with being a method for an emplaced multi-relational awareness integrating the mind, body, and world. Further research could usefully explore BeWeDō® as a *mobile place . . . a portable dōjō . . . a dynamic place for moving towards a common center*. BeWeDō® is an ongoing practice for co-creating possibilities with movement.

## Glossary

Aiki: For the founder of Aikidō Morihei Ueshiba (2010): "Aiki is the way we live and how we progress" (p. 65).

Aikidō: A Japanese martial art developed in the 1920s by Morihei Ueshiba.

Aikidoka: A practitioner of Aikidō.

Aikidō Shinryukan: A style of Aikikai.

Dō: Path or way of life.

Dōjō: A place for enlightenment, understanding, and training.

Keiko: Japanese word meaning to train in Aikidō with a focused mindset.

Sensei: Aikidō Instructor or teacher.

Tai no henko: is a body movement exercise where aikidoka move their body to a more desirable position.

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*All figures by Author unless indicated.*

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# Good to Grace... A dance informed perspective on leadership: Exploring the Emotional Choreography of Organization

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## **1. Abstract**

Dance is the expression of emotions through rhythm. As a performing art, dance is unique as it embodies emotions and flows directly through dancers in movement to catch the audience senses. But why do emotions matter? And how can emotions be sustained within an organizational structure? The challenge that lies at the heart of any dance performing art organizations is to combine artistic creativity and economic sustainability. The purpose of this paper is to explore how leadership plays a crucial role in creating sparks of emotions, potentializing them and maintaining a protective space for organizations to thrive. Recent bodies of research have suggested that aesthetics and art are increasingly important to understand today's organization. Writer and theorist Victor Shklovsky suggested that "Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant" (Shklovsky, 1990). My research project, carried out between end of May 2014 and the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014, is a qualitative case-study of one UK based dance company, Ballet Y. Based on the findings of this exploratory study, I propose to investigate the emotional 'inner world' of a creative organization, and how this world is sustained. Ballet Y study reveals a 3D representation of its emotional undertow along 3 axes: Mastery, Unity and Gravity.

## **2. Key Words**

Aesthetics, creative organization, dance, emotion, leadership, system psychodynamic

## **3. Introduction**

The challenge that lies at the heart of any dance performing art organizations is to combine artistic creativity and economic sustainability. The purpose of this paper is to explore how leadership plays a crucial role in creating sparks of emotions, potentializing them and maintaining a protective space for organizations to thrive.

Recent bodies of research have suggested that aesthetics and art are increasingly important to understand today's organization. Writer and theorist Victor Shklovsky suggested that "Art is a mean of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant" (Shklovsky, 1990).

In the next pages I look at art through the lenses of dance. I will first provide a short introduction to dance as a performing art. I will then briefly review the literature on leadership with respect to aesthetics leadership and covert leadership. To complete this theoretical framework, I will introduce selected psychoanalytical concepts, relevant to groups and organizations.

This study is a qualitative case-study of one UK based dance company, Ballet Y. The primary data of my research is 10 in-depth interviews, complemented by personal observations at different events, the analysis of audio-visual materials, public and member restricted documentations as well as news articles. The field work was carried out between end of May 2014 and the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014.

Based on the findings of Ballet Y exploratory study, my claim is that emotion is the engine of an art organization and the fuel that drives and connects dancing individuals, groups and audiences. Consequently, I propose a 3D representation of the emotional "inner-world" of this particular creative organization. Mastery, Unity and Gravity are the three axes around which emotions can flow. The shape of the organization depends on how members relate to time and space. The dynamics and flow of energy and resources will also be structured by the forces at play in the system and the strength of

the reinforcing factors. In the case of Ballet Y, the following factors bind the team together: selflessness, mutual respect, playfulness, containment and boundary management.

Leading to greatness a creative organization like Ballet Y requires not only aesthetic and 'structural' leadership but also graceful choreography of its emotional dynamics. I co-invite you behind the scene and below the surface of one of the world's leading ballet company, to discover why dance, why Ballet Y exists and capture through clinical lenses why its leadership is unique in this precise moment in this particular context.

This research has significant implication which does not limit itself to the dance world or the performing arts. As creativity becomes the leading edge in the corporate world, I believe Ballet Y offers an exploratory platform for excellence in leadership. This is also an invitation for leaders to go deeper in capturing their understanding of the organization they steward to foster its vitality. I believe that this research project can also be useful for consultants and coaches trained in clinical psychology as an exploratory platform to make sense of the emotional choreography of organizations.

#### **4. Research questions**

This study is a reflection of my quest to find answers to the question of how to combine artistic creativity and economic sustainability. I hypothesized that emotions play a critical role, emotion matters, especially in the context of a creative organization. Consequently a second question emerged: how do you sustain emotions in an organization structure?

#### **5. Literature Review**

*"I am not interested in how people are moving, but what moves people"*

*Pina Bausch*

##### **5.1 Setting the stage**

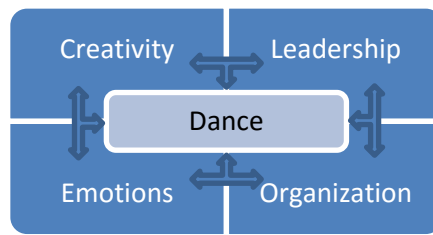
Dance is an artistic practice traditionally but not necessarily performed together with music. Judith R. Mackrell, in Encyclopaedia Britannica provides the following dual definition: "the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself. Dance is a powerful impulse, but the art of dance is that impulse channeled by skillful performers into something that becomes intensely expressive and that may delight spectators who feel no wish to dance themselves" (Mackrell, 2014).

For the purpose of this research project, I follow Leo Tolstoy's definition of art: "to evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling" (Tolstoy, 1899, ch.5). Dance is an art. It is an art of human movement where and when the body moves in space and time. H'Doubler claims that "art cannot be divorced from life – it is of life's essence. The central subject matter of all art is emotional value not fact. The art which expresses emotional values in movement is dance" (H'Doubler, 1998).

##### **5.2 A multi-faceted research field**

I will provide in the next paragraphs a brief cross-selection of theories that are linked with the research questions as illustrated by the diagram below.





**Diagram 1 - Literature Review across Five Fields**

There are many theories of leadership: Great Man/Traits, Scientific/Controller, People-Centered, Hero/Messiah, Eco/Connected (Visual.ly, 2012). Some argues that this is the least understood phenomenon despite the growing literature (Burns, 1978, Jackson and Parry, 2011). I will pick two schools of thought relevant for my research questions: covert leadership and aesthetic leadership and share a few insights.

Covert leadership was coined by Henry Mintzberg and describes, from the leader standpoint, what it takes to lead highly skilled professionals. Based on his observations of symphonic orchestra, Mintzberg states: “the profession itself, not the manager, supplies much of the structure and coordination” (Mintzberg, 1998, p.143). He also claims: “Professionals require little direction and supervision. What they do require is protection and support” (Mintzberg, 1998, p.146).

Aesthetic leadership shares with covert leadership the possibility to understand people and organization from different angles and senses. There is a growing body of research suggesting that aesthetics and art are increasingly important to understand today’s organization. I follow Hansen’s reference of aesthetics as ‘a sensory knowledge and felt meaning of objects and experiences’ (Hansen, 2007).

In their book ‘Aesthetic Leadership’ (Guillet de Monthoux, P. Gustaffson C. & Sjöstrand, S-E., 2007), the editors illustrate through 13 case studies in artistic organizations, general and art businesses, the importance of flow to widen the study of aesthetic beyond beauty and emotionality. All contributors develop the importance of surpassing the dyadic thinking and aiming toward a triadic perspective: “For aesthetic leaders, organizing means mapping and maintaining the three distinct fields [the management field, the administration field and the aesthetics field]” (Guillet de Monthoux, P. Gustafsson, C. Sjöstrand, S-E., 2007, p. 265). Wetterström illustrates in the case of the Royal Swedish Opera: “Managers should know how to facilitate necessary aesthetic energy. It could be to protect and support the flow and intensity in the artistic work, provide it with care, attention or resources. Managers must pay attention to problematic processes that require special support in the organization. Tradition and routines may block the circulation of items, ideas or money. An important task of the manager is to provide opportunities for collaboration and temporary teamwork” (Wetterström, 2007, p.49).

Early contributors to the aesthetic field, such as Strati (1999) and Linstead & Höpfl (2000) referred to creativity as an organizational resource that follows its own logic. Quoting De Masi, Strati elaborates: “When we study people’s creativity, [...] we observe organizational forms very different from those to which we have been accustomed by the dominant Taylorist and Fordist models. If we examine the organizational forms with which European artists and scientists experimented between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, we find ‘original methods for organizing creative work performed collectively’ (Strati, 1999, p.168).

There is a vast and growing literature on creativity, with many foci, organizational (Morris, n.d.), leadership (Kets de Vries, 1996, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006) and across domains (Kaufman and Baer, 2014). For my research project I will propose a simple definition of creativity as the encouraging of

ideas and the selection of strategic ways forward through dialogues and collaboration. Creativity requires a balance between different forces and facets.

Studies on emotions at work have reinforced the need for leaders to be managers of emotions (Ashkanasy, Härtel & Zerbe, 2005; Payne & Cooper, 2001; Quy Huy, 2012; Kumar & Raghavendran, 2013). For the purpose of my research project I will define emotions in quite broad terms, as the dynamic and complex flow of energy. Reporting about the major change program Royal Shakespeare Company had embarked on, Hewison, Holden & Jones wrote as number one lesson learned: “Emotions are important –acknowledge them. A remarkable feature of the RSC’s leadership and management style has been the regular and explicit reference to emotions”. (Hewison, Holden & Jones, 2010, p.19).

Many performing and visual arts have been researched from organizational and leadership perspectives: opera (Wetterström, 2007; Kaiser, 2008), theater (Ibbotson, 2008; Meisiek, 2007), orchestra (Hunt, Stelluto & Hooijberg, 2004; Maitlis, 1999; Mintzberg, 1998; Novicevic et al., 2011; Olson, Belohlav & Boyer, 2005; Vrendenburgh, Yunxia He, 2003), films (Catmul, 2014; Soila-Wadman, 2007). Dance, as an art form, however, has remained too often behind the curtains. I claim that Dance accommodates routine and structure with the art form. As an organization it brings together creativity (from designers, choreographers) and interpretation (dancers and musicians in the case of live music). In business terminology, the output of the creative process is an experience, an emotional experience.

Coming from different discipline, scholars have taken dance and dancers as their subject study and explored physical, psychological, pedagogical and sociological elements of the dance world. For example, research projects have focused on vocation (Laillier, 2011; Rannou & Rohanik, 2006; Sorignet, 2010), training and career (Li, 2011; Löytenen, 2012; Pickard, 2012; Scapolan & Montanari, 2013), well-being (Aalten, 2006; Hefferon & Ollis, 2006; Nordin-Bates, Quested, Walker & Redding, 2012), health and illness (Quested & Duda, 2010; Wainwright & Turner, 2003). These publications complement earlier work done in emotional counseling (Hamilton, 1998), emotional aspects of dance education (Buckroyd, 1998) and the career and culture of ballet (Wulff, 1998).

As a performing art, dance is inextricably linked to the attendance of spectators and their kinesthetic and empathetic responses. The experience of observing dance as a spectator has been researched from different angles, such as aesthetics (Alvarez, 2011), neuro-aesthetic (Cross & Ticini, 2011) and cognitive-science (Eckard, Gargano & Porter, 2010). Both articles by Christensen & Calvo-Merino (2013) and by Vukadinovic (2011) provide a useful overview of these investigations.

Despite rare but excellent books on turning around dance organizations and driving creativity (Kaiser, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Crompton, 2013), less is known about how emotions are managed and sustained in dance organizations and how their leadership creates structure that could support creativity.

### **5.3 Towards an unconscious aesthetic in creative organization study**

I will conclude the literature review by introducing a selection of psychoanalytical ideas and angles. As mentioned by Julia Buckroyd referring to Melanie Klein: “as human beings, from our earliest days, we are capable of feeling a wide range of emotions [...]. Indeed, the failure to acknowledge and accept the existence of those feelings in ourselves and others condemns us to find more damaging ways of expressing them by acting them out” (Buckroyd, 1998, pp.8-9). Emotional and unconscious psychodynamics structure an organization behind the scenes and below the surface (Amado, 1995; Armstrong, 2005).

How do leaders cope with intense pressure and group’s anxiety? In the artistic world as well as in the creative industry the processes of splitting (Diamond, 1993) can be at play, as primitive defense against anxiety, this can polarize organizations around artists versus managers (Chiapello, 1997), good against bad, us and them mentality. Can an organizational structure offer a ‘good-enough’ holding environment and how (Lehman, 2009)? Winnicott’s theoretical concept is clarified by DeCosta along those words: “For Winnicott, transitional phenomena are located in the psychological space he calls

‘intermediate space’ or ‘potential space’. In successful psychological development, this ‘space’ becomes the location of all cultural experience, including artistry, which he also ties to ‘good enough mothering’ (DeCosta, 1991).

My research will use a system psychodynamics perspective for interpretation (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Gould, Stapley & Stein, 2006). I will complete my analysis by further insights from the unconscious life of groups and organizations (de Board, 1978; Diamond, 1993; Huffington et al., 2004; Kets de Vries, 2011) as well as the psychoanalysis of creativity (Halton, 2004). Central to my thinking is to follow Biran’s recommendations (Biran, 2006) and keep Bion’s binocular vision, ‘the psychoanalytical approach through the individual and the psychoanalytical approach through the group’ (Biran, 2006, p.83).

## **6. Methodology**

In line with Creswell’s recommendations, I chose an exploratory qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2013). This is motivated by the fact that the dance sector, being under-investigated, models and variables were not available for answering my research questions: how do you combine artistic creativity and economic sustainability as well as how do you sustain emotions in organization structure and why does it matter? The aim of my project is indeed in finding and answering *How?* and *Why?* questions. Creswell’s research line of conduit is reinforced by Eisenhardt who states a case study approach is “particularly well suited to new research areas” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p 548).

This particular view is also supported by Yin who claims: “Case study is a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p.90). Yin complemented his original view in a later edition of his seminal book (Yin, 2003) by stressing that case study approach is particularly relevant when “boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.

I used multiple data-collection methods in line with a case study approach. I conducted myself 10 in-depth interviews and participated as a modest donor in direct observations. All in all, I joined 16 ‘friends’ events, such as rehearsals, master-classes and interviews with Questions and Answers session moderated by journalist. I also attended 8 ballet and dance performances in the UK and in France. Finally, I consulted complementary secondary source documents (prints, audio-visual social media).

I believe it fits very well the clinical and organizational perspectives. By using multiple sources, I was able to compare and contrast what people say they do, what people believe they say and what exactly is going on, listening with the third ear (Van de Loo, 2007) whilst staying aware of what is happening above and below the surface.

I limited my main ‘field work’, such as interviews and observation, by time, to be finished by the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. Finally to remain realistic within a 6 month remit, I favored to go in-depth and to focus on a single case study.

The name of the dance company is purposely coded as Ballet Y to respect confidentiality. Codes have been used in this paper to ensure the anonymity of my informants.

## **7.The research Study**

*“The real voyage of discovery begins not with visiting new places but in seeing familiar landscapes with new eyes” – Marcel Proust*

### **7.1 The context**

From a leadership standpoint, dance organizations are meaningful areas of research. To survive, dance organization, like in the other art sectors need to succeed both artistically and financially (Paulus &

Lejeune, 2013). As suggested by Abfalter, "In many respects, the performing arts as well as the creative industries can be considered an extreme case for leadership" (Abfalter, 2013, p.297). Many performing arts organizations are not-for profit institutions, mission driven, with a dual leadership structure around artistic director and executive director (Cornforth & Brown, 2013). Artistic not-for-profit organizations very much rely on a "family" of supporters (Kaiser, 2008b)

Creating art involves a series of uncertain steps and no artistic organizations ever know upfront whether their production will be a success or not. Roche and Whitehead explain "in the performing arts, uncertainty comes not only from the external environment in which any organization operates; it comes from within the production process itself. It is the creative process itself that causes the uncertainty" (Roche & Whitehead, 2005). Leadership acts as a prism through which constant trade-offs, such as short-term vs long term, strategic, artistic and financial imperatives are experienced at organizational level. What make dance organizations complex stem from the role played by artists in the institutions (Roche & Whitehead, 2005) and the need for constant innovation (Kaiser, 2008a, 2008b) to harvest the emotional connection with the audience.

For the purpose of this paper I will refer to dance, as a sector, a dance company and art form in general. Dance includes its most sophisticated and classical western version, ballet and more recent expressions, modern and contemporary dance.

The dance world described with mastery by Helena Wulff in 1998 is no longer a fully 'closed world' (Wulff, 1998). Many companies understand the need to open up to the public and to targeted groups and audiences. Some stage their democratization towards their sponsors and individual donors and audiences, developing new communication channels with social media. In 2014, on October the 1<sup>st</sup>, in a global first, World Ballet Day showed live for 24 hour, behind-the-scenes actions from the rehearsal studios of five world-class ballet companies.

There are a few additional contextual elements worth noting and keeping in mind:

- "Memory is central to the art" (Homans, 2013, xi). Homans remind us "Ballet repertory is not recorded in books or in library. It is held instead in the bodies of dancers" (Homans, 2013, xi). Also tradition and the teaching of the masters are very prevalent to the ballet world: "it is these relationships, the bonds between masters and students, that bridge the centuries and give ballet its foothold in the past" (Homans, 2013, xi).
- Maintaining and creating new repertoire is quite a challenge for dance companies. "The ballet repertory is notoriously thin" (Homans, 2013, xi). Although the western art, originated in France at the Louis XIV royal court, is rooted in more than 300 hundreds years of tradition, there are only a remaining handful of "classics" that survived the centuries, productions from the 19<sup>th</sup> century created in France and in Russia. The rest of the dance repertoire has been created more recently in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. According to Ballet Y Artistic Director, not all the "classics" still work for today's audience and some of the more recent choreographers have locked in their creation with intellectual rights that limit the ability of dance companies to rejuvenate the art form over time (D7).
- Ballet in the UK is a rather new art form (Bull, 2009). Homans reinforces that point: "the twentieth century redrew the map of classical ballet [...] By the mid-twentieth century, however, English Ballet – with Margot Fonteyn as its reigning queen – would become Britain's most venerated and representative national art and the Royal Ballet an undisputed world leader in dance." (Homans, 2013, p.217).
  - The development of the arts and culture in the UK has been supported by the government since 1940 when it established a Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts to promote and maintain British culture. Its first chairman was John Maynard Keynes, the now world-renowned economist and then member of the British government, established the "arms length" principle, which still governs the relationship between the UK arts policy and

the government. The council has evolved into the Arts Council of England. The public funding policy for the arts has had its ups and down over the past 65 years. Current debate in the UK is whether there is a cultural decline or a renewal (Tusa, 2014)

According to the Arts Council “there are an estimated 200 dance companies in England and the dance economy employs around 30,000 people from dancers and choreographers to promoters and physiotherapists” ([www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)). The Arts Council invests £ 340 million each year. 7 opera and ballet companies receive 22% of the national portfolio. Ballet Y is one of their 7 large-scale investments.

## **7.2 How and Why Ballet Y?**

I followed Flyvbjerg’s strategy for selection of samples and cases and selected Ballet Y case according to the information-oriented selection process. Ballet Y can indeed be considered as a paradigm case to “develop a metaphor or establish a school for the domain that the case concerns” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.230).

The second reason that motivated my choice of Ballet Y was of course access and pragmatism. Ballet Y was the most reactive and welcoming company in Europe. Its membership offering was definitely a valuable platform for research behind the scenes. I chose to remain focus on a single exploratory case to experience a creative organization during half of its season.

In summary, Ballet Y represents a current case for exploring a performing art organization at a critical time of its life cycle in a specific country.

## **7.3 How I got access?**

I began my study end of May 2014. Personal connections provided me access to Ballet Y's Chairman. I first talked to him over the phone and had a brief overview of the company and its board.

Mid-June, I met A in his office in London and we agreed on confidentiality and he kindly offered to introduce me to Ballet Y’s Executive Director and Human Resources Director. In the meantime, during the summer I went to see a couple of performances, one of their most famous ballet production and one collaboration work with an opera. After my first initial meetings in September, I expanded interviews, with the precious help of Ballet Y’s Executive Assistant, to include a wider array of Ballet Y’s informants.

## **7.4 My position in the research setting**

My position as a researcher in Ballet Y is a balanced one between the dance and the business world. I trained in France as an elite ballet student from the age of 5 to the age of 18 year old. I then, moved from stage to audience when I entered my business career. My special connection to Ballet Y, as a Friend and modest donor (since the 9th of May 2014), provided personal observations based on attending exclusive events and added data beyond interviewing and attending dance performances.

## **7.5 Welcome to Ballet Y**

This exploratory case study brings you behind-the-scene of Ballet Y, one of UK premier ballet company. Founded in the last century, the company has gained a wide recognition for touring its high quality artistic productions nationally and internationally. Less than 3 years before I started this project, the company welcomed its tenth artistic director, one of the world greatest ballerina to lead Ballet Y, both on stage and off stage to collaborate with the best and most creative choreographers, guest teachers, designers and guest artists. These collaborations have strengthened Ballet Y’s reputation. The company is increasingly invited to perform to festivals and theatres around the UK, in Europe and

internationally. The company delivers more than hundreds performances a year, with a repertoire of classical ballet and contemporary dance.

Home to 70 dancers and 60 musicians, Ballet Y employs an artistic team of highly skilled and experienced professionals together with a Music core team. In addition, working off stage in the artistic area are experts in scheduling, producing, company and tour management, dancer's health, costume and technical areas. Finally, executives and professionals support the company in management, promotion and learning, fundraising, administration and finance (Ballet Y website). For some productions and on tour, the company contracts with external artistic and technical highly skilled professionals.

Ballet Y's mission is best described by its then current executive director as "to promote the highest standard of ballet, and take the tradition of the classics, ... into new territory but then also crucially to deliver them to the widest possible audience" (B, I, 7'20 - *see pp 22-23 for coding information*). Core to its artistic purpose, is Ballet Y commitment to live music. Additionally, Ballet Y engages in learning and promoting the art and well-being of dance to schools, targeted communities and public areas.

The company annual budget is balanced between public subsidies (40%), ticket sales (40%), private and corporate sponsorships (20%). As a charity, Ballet Y is governed by a board of high profile and experienced members, mainly from the business community. His Chairman, a former board member, has been in his role for 2 years, when I started this project. Another interesting feature of Ballet Y is its wide array of about 20 nationalities on stage and off-stage. The organizational structure of its corps de ballet follows a traditional hierarchy with many ranks (8) from artist (its lowest level) to lead principal positions. In addition, Ballet Y invites Guest Artists (dancers who have achieved a high rank with their company) to perform lead roles in their classic productions.

Under a new artistic and executive leadership, the company has welcomed recently a new permanent management team (with the exception of the technical director, all executives have joined over the past 12 months). Ballet Y is enjoying an increasingly positive artistic trajectory. During the summer 2014, the Arts Council confirmed to Ballet Y a still stand funding grant for the next three years.

## **8. Data gathering and analysis**

### **8.1 Data gathering**

In total I was able to conduct personally 10 in-depth interviews, including 8 semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 to 60 minutes and two additional sources. 7 interviews were conducted at Ballet Y London premises, in the interviewee's office, Ballet Y's canteen and its meeting room. One interview took place in a theater during Ballet Y UK tour. To complement these perspectives, I met twice with the company Chairman (30 minutes, each) and had a long exchange with a significant donor to Ballet Y (2 hour discussion). For each, I took notes during and after our meetings.

I chose a semi-structured interviewing method to hear each participant's story (Stake, 1995). Also, with this approach I was able to listen and experience the interviewees in their familiar environment, putting a strong emphasis on 'listening with a third ear' (Van de Loo, 2007). My questioning protocol was rather flexible and I adapted my questions to the different stakeholders. The following questions consisted of the core of the interview:

- what is your background and what brought you to Ballet Y?
- what were your first impressions?
- How would you describe Ballet Y's culture?
- How would you describe Ballet Y's organization and structure?
- Why dance? Why choreograph? Why give to Ballet Y?
- Why does Ballet Y exist?

The order of my set of questions varied by different informants and new questions were added when necessary (Stake, 1995).

I also gathered data from observations as a participant observer, in my role of Ballet Y Circle Member. I participated in 16 events, all organized by Ballet Y, with the exception of one event set up by another ballet company involving a former guest artist to Ballet Y. These events allow me to meet and interact at large with dancers, almost all of the entire artistic team, the orchestra, the Artistic Director and the Music Director, Ballet Y staff, the costume department, donors and a few past and current board members. The observation period spanned over half of the company season (from July to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014).

In addition to these exclusive events, I went to see 8 dance performances in 7 different venues, of which 2 productions from Ballet Y and one of their collaboration with an opera. These performances provided additional opportunities to familiarize myself with venue premises and partners and talk informally with Ballet Y's audiences.

Before and after the interviews, events and performances, I read secondary sources such as official documents, member restricted information and various news and social media. I also read one biography of a now retired company ballerina. As Ballet Y member, I receive regularly e-newsletter and information emails. I also went regularly on their company web-site. I attended a UK performance where the Artistic Director performed the lead role. In addition, I collected audio-visual and print documents, which informed about the company brand and public image.

I was able to observe the Artistic Director (who is still dancing as a Lead Principal) in role in many occasions. I was also briefly introduced to the newly hired Head of Marketing and Communications. I gathered and selected Audio-visual materials of Ballet Y Artistic Director, such as interviews by journalist or art documentaries and programs, covering in different roles over a period of the past 5 years. These extra data were expected to and did provide new insights. As recommended by Eisenhardt, adding new methods during the research process brings new perspectives (Eisenhardt, 1989).

## **8.2 Data analysis**

In case study research, the movement between data collection and analysis is rather fluid. Stake (1995) reminds us that: "There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations. Analysis essentially means taking something apart. We take our impressions, our observations apart." (Stake, 1995, p.71)

In the following paragraph, I will explain how I decoded and gave meaning to the narratives and the complementary information I gathered. I proceeded in the following way:

- First I immersed myself in the research context by participating to events organized by Ballet Y and other dance organizations. I also went to see performances. Before each event, I followed the same routine, I noted on my field book my impressions, opened up to the moment and tried as much as possible to catch with all my senses the particular smell, sound, tempo of the place, almost free floating in body and mind. I took more field notes after the event, keeping a diary about issues, phenomena I observed discussed informally and experienced in me.
- In parallel with attending these events and performances, I started end of September my interviews with Ballet Y executives and dancers. I ensured the interviewees and I would enjoy as much as possible a relaxed atmosphere to elicit meaningful disclosure of experiences. I asked for permission to record our conversation.
- I recorded 8 out of 10 interviews and transcribed them. For the chairman and the donor's interviews, I took notes in writing or mentally. I wrote in my field book a detailed debrief report

after each of the 10 interviews. I made careful notes of non-verbal aspects and also what was not mentioned. I highlighted the images and metaphors interviewees used in addition to their logical flow of words. I captured my associations and general impressions.

- Data were derived from the narrative interviews as well as my field notes and the documents I gathered.
- I compared, contrasted and clustered the themes that emerged from all the methods I used.
- My process of sense-making was iterative. I reduced the aggregated data by screening them against my research questions and compared the empirical evidence with existing theory (Yin, 2003).

As reminded by Löytönen, there are both advantages and disadvantages in researching a field where you have passion and past experience: “this position creates a problem, which Barbara Czarniawska calls ‘home-blindness’” (Löytönen, 2012, p. 264). To mitigate these risks I used self-criticism and self-reflection along the process to put in perspectives my observations and interpretations. The INSEAD Consulting and Coaching for Change program has increased my ability to use self-reflexivity and apply a repertoire of clinical approaches to organizations and its informants.

## 9. Findings and discussion

*“There is enough of dance’s joyful power on display to make you believe it’s worth all the anxiety”*

*Ismene Brown*

Although there is no single approach to leadership, Ballet Y offers an exploratory platform for reflection. I developed an identification system to allow participants to remain anonymous and discuss results. For example a quote from respondent B during a recorded interview will be reported as B, I-(time).

The table below provides useful information on respondents (interviewed and observed).

Gender	#	
Female	7	B, C, D, E, F, J, M
Male	9	A, G, H, I, K, L, O, N, P
Nationality		
British	9	A, B, C, D, G, I, J, O, N
International	7	E, F, H, K, L, M, P
Function		
Artistic, on stage	5	F, G, H, L, M
Artistic, off stage	5	C, I, K, O, N
Management, Non-executive, Donor	6	A, B, D, E, J, P
Research mode		
Interviews	10	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, J, O, P
Audio-visuals (D1 to D8), websites, social media & print documents	56	A, 2009-2014 (audio-visuals)
Observations	24	M, N, L, H, I, K, A, B, E, F, G

### 9.1 Three key leadership themes: Mastery, Unity and Gravity



Key themes emerged from both the narratives, the events and performances I attended as well as the documents I gathered: mastery, unity and gravity. In the following paragraphs I will first bring the voices of Ballet Y members and share findings. My report will progress smoothly into analysis and further dive into deeper interpretations.

### **9.1.1 Mastery**

At the first master class I attended with guest teacher K (O-MC1), the session was introduced by its moderator with the following words: “Masters are great learners, masters are great partners and masters are explorers of the soul”.

#### **9.1.1/a “Masters are great learners”**

Ballet Y highly skilled artistic professionals enter the realm of mastery through practice, and practice and even more practice. Following elite and vocational training started in childhood, professional dancers continuously improve themselves. They take class and rehearse every day six days a week. Both soloist G and Artistic Director M, refer to their art as a craft, which one learns from apprenticeship with teachers, Ballet masters but also with their peers, or higher rank dancers.

M reflects on her experience and her remarkable career: “I have learnt a lot from ballet teachers, I have learnt a lot from choreographers, but I have learnt the most from my colleagues” (M, D5-6’33). M refers to a couple of ballerinas that have hugely inspired her and still do, pointing out for example to Sylvie Guillem, “someone that has everything, and achieved everything, works every day, works more than anyone else, someone that has nothing to prove and still takes class every day, and gives 100%... people that last are the people that work hard” (M, D5-7’28).

G shared his story with me, and recalls special figures, dancers and teachers: “I guess they told me the craft, my craft. I think when you join the company, you don’t know how to be a dancer, how to be on stage, you have to learn it very quickly and you can’t teach that until you are in it... for me it was really watching and just observing and being around people that were extremely talented people, and just try to pick up everything they do” (G, I-14’03). On one particular teacher, G recalls: “he was a fantastic teacher, really really good, hard, tough, tough teacher, but for me I am really pleased because what you don’t really realize when you are at school, when you come to a company, no one really, no one treats you the same, no one is there for you, no one is there to push you, so what we have is the voice of the teacher.. (G, I-14’47).

On the other hand, F found that support within Ballet Y during her first years with the company, with her Ballet Master: “in terms of the emotional support, my biggest influencing teacher on me was someone I had met before when I was a child, ... and by the time I joined the company ... he was the ballet master here, and we had a terrific relationship and we were really really super close and he supported me massively on a physical level, he helped me with some injuries I had at the beginning of my career, emotionally he helped me with so many things like learning how to go on stage, and not be nervous, not so too nervous like you freak out, how to pace yourself, how to know when it is enough for one day, how to know when it is time to have fun, when it is time to work but of course then also the incredible amount of knowledge I learned from him about dance, about technique and how to go on stage and how to communicate things on stage, that was an incredible relationship I had, and I am so grateful” (F, I, 10’46).

#### **9.1.1/b “Masters are great Partners”**

Whether in the studio or on stage, K states: “you find a way to make your partner become themselves” (K, O-10). B summarizes the constant search for excellence as spinning the right dynamic for the organization: “so that they feel that the organization is on the move with new challenges and new opportunities for them. And what [M] has been very good at, and it is [M] not me, it is understanding

the importance of attracting the right répétiteurs [from the French, to repeat, to practice] and the right people to work with the dancers. Actually, you will get brilliant dancers if they can have brilliant classes. And one of the fact that I was the most proud of was that recently when we lost one of our dancer to [a renowned ballet company], three weeks later, he said can he come back and do some of our classes, and of course we will let him, lovely to keep the connections, it is such a tribute to the atmosphere, to the quality of the teaching, to what you can offer" (B, I-23'01).

Backstage, mastery and partnering goes also hand in hand. O for example qualifies Ballet Y and its creative attribute: "As a company, I think it comes back to that. I know people who come here and are just amazed. Can we do that? Yeah, we can do that. Using an American phrase, it is a can-do attitude, not just my department but all departments" (O, I-32'). Ballerinas never walk alone! The orchestra conductors take very much care of lead ballerinas, as I noticed during the working stage rehearsal on tour in the UK. As much as possible, he finetunes the orchestra tempo to support best the dancing ensemble.

Nevertheless, mastery comes at a price. D states: "Every time the artistic team changes, I hear reports of what it has been like over the past few years, every time an artistic director changes, or when a choreographer comes in, with very strong personality, that can affect confidence"(D, I-41'32). F echoes that point: "Yeah, it was very tough, very difficult transition because I think in a way I had it too good... I don't think you can have those relationships all the time, it is hard to have that level, because they have to like you as well, you have new people coming in and they have their own ideas what they want to change"(F, I-12'10).

G, sheds light on what makes Ballet Y special, its openness and the search for perfectionism: "we are judging ourselves and people are judging us constantly, so we have to be open to that as well and receptive [...] we are not worried about the niceties, we just want it to be right and we aim for that perfection whichever, how we get there, we want to, we are like sponges, we take everyone's information" (G, I- 4'31). G further develops on dancers' psyche: "as dancers, because we work on being, we work on negative, it is not good enough, perfection cannot be achieved and you strive achieving perfection, so it is never going to be right, never, it is never the perfect point [...] we really struggle to keep positive feedback. If you give a dancer 'that was amazing' he would just go...hmmm thank you, that's enough, we just don't do it. It is really hard, and it is almost like we have to swallow that thank you and move on. If it would be a negative, yeah, yeah, I could have done that, I would have done that if I thought of that, yes thanks, I make sure I do that next time. That is how we work, so positive feedback is just... because it is not, it is the discipline, the criticism". (G, I-30'15).

Mastery comes with additional pain, such as injuries. B realistically says: "It is tough, and you have constant problems thrown out, you have injuries, and all of those things, it is the known unknown and the unknown unknowns" (B, I-21'05). These injuries not only have physical and emotional consequences on individuals, they are also psychosocial symptoms of the organization and its wider system. C comments: "you just have to have a contingency for something happening like that. [M] has done a lot of work on the medical support here, sports science was introduced and nutrition and all sorts of things... and they have seen huge improvements but for the moment we have seen a number of things happened with people when they have had injuries that have been going on for two years and now it is the time that they need to deal with it. So there are things you just don't know, somebody who leaves suddenly, and we have had a couple of those things coming this year. They are not sudden injuries, they are injuries, a long time coming and that can be expensive because you can't always find them in the UK, you have to find them overseas. You are dealing with flights, accommodation and the stress to having to find somebody. " (C, I-25'45).

G and M are very aware and open to talk about their emotional baggage, positive and negative they carry from their training and early career. Today, they intent to invest in positively changing the organizations they are interacting with or the production they are taking part in. This relates to what

Halton calls “reparatory creativity” (Halton, 2004). However, hard they want to drive positive changes and establish different mindset, it sometimes bounces back in a strange way. M was introduced in a recent public workshop on creativity as the ballerina “who danced on a burst appendix” (D7) and not as the champion who has introduced sports science in her organization and who, together with her team, convinced sponsors and experts to work on a new program to support dancers’ physical and mental welfare (MD2).

This may also illustrate the pressure on ballerinas and dancers, and the public need, our need for heroes, for ‘sacred monsters’. The expectations the public and the fans put on dance stars can almost limit their ability to take new roles and be themselves over time. Dance critic and journalist, Ismene Brown recalls that “Sacred Monsters’ was the term first coined “for the Parisian stage stars of the 19th century, and captures the expectations heaped on major celebrities, as well as their potential de-personalisation, they can become freak-shows or mere executors of rituals, their individuality and freedom of expression swallowed up by the parts their worshipping fans expect them to play” (Brown, 2014). Brown further develops: “the pressures exerted by the stage and classical dance traditions on their sacred monsters are very real, and the anxiety caused is serious” (Brown, 2014).

### **9.1.1/c “Masters are explorers of the soul”**

M in an art documentary reflects on what partnership means for her and what it means to have, on stage, a constant partner over a certain period of times: “What you build is trust. This goes beyond. You are naked on stage. There is no hiding and you can only do that when you have gone through many hours together. When you have gone through amazing performances and through really bad ones and you forgive each other. All of that creates a synergy, trust and a friendship and a love. You get to a point when you actually breathe together, when you hear each other, when you understand the mood, you can really feel each other, very very well [...] It is emotional trust. It is trust to take things a little bit further. It is trust to fall in love, really fall in love on the stage and know that the next day we are going to be able to look at each other and not feel embarrassed” (M, D-3).

M leads with the same grace off stage, in her role as artistic director, and this is how she talks to a journalist on a national TV program about her dual roles as lead principal and artistic director: “I do class everyday with the dancers and I rehearse everyday with the dancers and, yes I have meetings and then if I have to come back to the theater to see a run through I come back to the theater. So I understand that my work is very broad but I think it works for us especially because I am so much in touch with what they are going through. And that is so important when you are changing an organization. And I am making some very big changes in terms of the repertoire and the kind of choreographers we are working with. So I need to understand how are they feeling, how it is translated in their bodies, how are they coping. Can I push another gear or do I have to, you know, stop there and let them digest what they are doing and then wait for another season to push them even further” (M, D-2).

### **9.1.2 Unity**

Most of the respondents mentioned unity as a major characteristic of effective creative organization. My interviews, the special events I attended and the materials all reinforced this theme.

Ballet Y is united behind its artistic director, who joined the company two years before I started this project, as its tenth leader in role. M’s vision and drive provides a strong role modelling and energy to the company. As she is still dancing as lead principal, she embodies leadership and creativity at the same time. She is leading by doing (Mintzberg, 1998), she is dancing the talk. C elaborates: “I think with the turnover of artistic staff, sorry not, the artistic director, you get a rejuvenation of vision as well, [...] that has its good and down side, for the moment it is a very good side, because you know [M] has a very strong idea of what she wants” (C, I-11’22). On the same line, J, reflecting on her first

impressions as she arrived at Ballet Y, explains: "It was an organization that appeared to be going through a shift and they had already some of what they needed already in place and had been in place for several months. That was an artistic director and an artistic vision, that was relatively clear but for me I wasn't as clear about the artistic vision when I took the job, since I've come and got here, I was less conscious of it then, I am getting more conscious of it now" (J, I-4'21).

E illustrates how she views Ballet Y's culture: "I think it is interesting to see the fact that there is [M]'s ambition for the company, and I think for the moment [M]'s ambition for the company overtakes anything else that was there before her and for the moment it is very much about being creative, and being innovative and at the same time being friendly and family like, and I think the friendly and family like has always been a [Ballet Y]'s thing. We have always been like that, being friendly, really accessible, and easy to join, and what [M] has put in is a kind of ambition and passion" (E, I- 17'09).

Passion for the art form is indeed another factor that unifies people at Ballet Y. G articulates: "we have a goal, an aim we want to achieve, and this is true to everyone, management, artistic staff [...] they care so much about ballet, and I would think that one criteria of becoming part of [Ballet Y] is that you care about the product, you care. I don't think there is anyone up there that just comes in and ticks the box and then leaves. We all push to achieve something that is far from what we are paid to do and what is in our job description and I think it should be no matter what job you are in. if you would work only for what you are paid for, we wouldn't get anything done" (G, I- 40'13).

D echoes this assertion: "I think a lot of it is just the passion for ballet. We are none of us here for the money [...] There is a real will that everybody wants the best for the organization. It is not just a job for people here. As well as we have to earn money to live, you don't get people here who aren't passionate about what they are doing. That has to be wrangled a little bit and managed" (D, I-8'54).

B articulates how important it is to create a sense of one company, one Ballet Y to "make sure that the dancers and the management share the same vision, because that's one of the problems of creative organizations, you can end up with two silos and they don't talk to each other and they resent each other [...] so trying to make both with the emails and the company meetings a sense of shared understanding of where the company is going, developing a management style that has a more open approach" (B, I-14'52). Maintaining unity is vital because then the organization has the capacity to attract and hold member's energy. The separate units of Ballet Y can therefore vibrate in harmony, flow together and each contributing to the whole. B develops "you make sure that the marketing assistant who is checking that box office numbers, understand they are absolutely crucial to a creative organization, and they have their own little bit of creativity, they can help deliver to success, alongside the junior members of the corps de ballet together with [lead principals], and the first violin and the third trombone. You have got to create an ecology where every single contribution is valued and then you are all driving, and it works" (B, I-23'49).

Both the artistic director and the music director were well embedded in positive narratives. They are particularly praised for their ability to hold the artistic and business complexities within themselves and unite the company. Their energy and behavior reinforce Ballet Y leadership discourse. G, a dancer states: "Yes this is our orchestra, they tour with us, I know quite a few of them but before it was very separated, now there is a lot more integration, when [N] arrived as conductor, I think he promoted that, the fact that we should be one, we are one" (G, I-42'). D says: "the artistic director is a lot more pragmatic and business like that I was expecting [...] she is engaged with the business side." (D, I-13'43). J adds: "[M] is both artistically visionary but also is open to people. And I think that is really crucial but quite rare" (J, I-5'05).

There is obviously a strong dependency on the artistic leader, which creates anxiety, expressed for example by G at a Circle Dinner, "we would like her to stay forever". Ballet Y type of work group culture (Diamond, 1993, p.97) is historically 'autocratic' but there are clear evidence in the language and the

behavior that its culture is possibly moving to a resilient category. There is a push for collaboration (J,D,C,G) high quality work and meaningful relationships (C,O,D, F) the dual leadership structure creates a psychological place for twinship / alterego (B, J).

Reflecting on her professional experience to date, D contrasts her first impressions having been with the company for the past nine months before I started my research: "Compared to other creative organization, where it is more individual and people feel entitled to, actually there is this creativity but they [the dancers] very much see themselves as part of one organization. There is much more, I hesitate to use the word teamwork, it is and it is not, but they all move together a lot more together" (D, I-10'03)

She further develops: "Actually, one of the challenges with dancers, because they do move as one, they are not as demanding in any way as I was expecting and that causes problems. It is very difficult to find out what is wrong" (D, I-11'13). D relates to exchanges she had with a colleague in the dance sector, outside of Ballet Y who very aptly put it together: "The problems with dancers is they are so focus, and they are so used to pushing themselves, pushing themselves, pushing themselves, that quite often, it is not until it becomes intolerable or wrong that they suddenly say I can't do it anymore and by that point it got beyond what is manageable". D elaborates further: "I have to be careful there is always stuff going on underneath that I may not find out" (D, I-13'00)

### **9.1.3 Gravity**

I will now focus on gravity and explore how emotions organized themselves in gravity.

If you could enter Ballet Y kitchen, you could read on the wall the following lines: "We danced before language and this is our promise. Through our art we will tell your story. We will dance the times you fell in love. We will dance your dreams and your fears. We will dance your death. Our suspended moments, grand glories, kaleidoscopic whirlings, rats, swans, firebirds, heroes, heroines and tracing of psyche are your mirror. We are not dolls. We are artists, young and hungry. At war with gravity to capture poetry from air. We do not exist to embalm traditions. We exist to cherish them and then create more. We leap and grasp for the new. We are for everyone. Watch ballet and you are not rich or poor. Cultured or barbarian. Brain or brawn. You are human. Full of lust and adventure. We are yours and we are you".

The 'wall paper' statement was printed a couple of years ago before I started my project. But what is it today? Why dance? Why Ballet Y exist? I am co-inviting you behind the scenes and below the surface of one of the world's leading ballet company. For the dancers, it started at a very early age, in their childhood. The dancers you meet now at Ballet Y all made their 'child dreams' come true, through sweat and tears, joy and blisters. Let's hear a couple of them. F explains why she dances: "I think I dance because it is fun, I like to go to work every day, I like the atmosphere, I find it strange to not dance, and I think for me it is really a calling and it would be like why do you breathe, obviously I have to breathe. You know for me it is very innate to who I am. I suppose it is an identity to an extent as well, I don't know if that is a positive or negative. I think because it is to dance it is something you need to inhabit, you can't like stick it on put on it and take it off, it is a part of you, and I think I just enjoy communicating, I love going on stage and expressing emotions, yes I think it is about communicating" (F, I-22'43). G shares his reasons: "It is a high. Emotionally, probably the high you can feel, with other people around you, other than if you are told that someone died, or I don't know one of these emotions, this is the only thing that compares to that. And to achieve that every night, that's something I can't get from anything else. I think that one of the things that a lot of dancers have said to me after they have retired, they can't find anything that fills the whole of being a dancer on stage, and I think that what it is that emotion. Also we are also so open with everyone, you know, with our colleagues, nothing is hidden, yeah, well there are probably secrets, but we are emotionally quite open, so

everyone, so you see a lot of tears, a lot of laughs, so there is a lot of fights, because there is no barriers" (G, I-3'30).

So how are those emotions potentialized and maintained? Why does Ballet Y exist? How are these sparks of emotions nurtured every day, whatever wind is blowing 'outside in' and 'inside out' (Gould et al. 2006)? From an organizational standpoint, I propose that the center of gravity is the intersection, the convergence of individual aspirations and the company's mission. It is also the ability to stay connected in a constantly changing and uncertain environment. So why dance? Why choreograph? Why give to Ballet Y meets or approaches why Ballet Y exists? It is not a fixed point, it is a moving target.

Clearly all the informants I met were able to articulate Ballet Y *raison d'être*: "to provide the highest standards of dance to the widest audience possible" (B, I-6'51). The company psychological weight comes with a shared sense of work group (Kets de Vries, 2011). Many informants echoed what B articulates: "We will stand up for our ability to attract the best dancers, and designers to come and work for us, so in a sense, when you talk about harnessing creativity or how do you drive creativity, that's the task" (B, I-22'02).

Additional insights I gathered during my 'field work' relate to the importance of the environmental provisions, in which Ballet Y health and creativity is dependent upon. Winnicott developed his psychoanalytical thoughts within the relational/structure model: "the center of gravity of the being does not start off in the individual. It is in the total set-up" (*my translation of* Lehman, 2009, p.66). Private donation and sponsorship as well public funding participate to the "holding environment". M articulates that public funding help the creative process: "That is the beauty of the British system [...]. We can use the safety of the public funding to challenge ourselves, to be creative, [...] to take risks in choreographers that no one knows yet. But at the same time, we have the responsibility to attract private funding and to attract the audience, because without that, we cannot survive" (M, D7-33'17). Private funding comes with its challenges (ethical, reputational and cyclical) and requires leadership to manage boundaries. At the same time, the support of private donors, Ballet Y's circle friends, is not only fiduciary. It participates to the affective loop. Here are a couple of donors expressing their emotional link and resonance at the season-preview: "I want to congratulate the company for its latest creation. I was overwhelmed, it was something very very special". Another shares: "Thank you very much for making everybody here feel so welcomed". Ballet Y's chairman reinforced the company's values: "The accessibility point is very important to me. Being a friendly company where people engage at every level, this is the vitality of the company. We cannot ever lose that and we will never lose that".

To conclude on the gravity theme, it is important to note that all respondents refer constantly to a rival dance institution in their narratives. Whilst I understand very well the need for benchmark and value the pragmatism of Ballet Y management to import best practices, I also believe that this comparison, in positive and negative terms, creates a psychological anchor internally and externally. When M took her job as Artistic Director, she declared publicly I want Ballet Y to be the most loved company. It makes Ballet Y competition for the audience's attention look like sibling rivalry. Nevertheless, depending on people's emotional capital, it creates resonances in the organization that vibrates in different tones: "we are not [it]" (J), "the barre is very high" (F), "less hierachical" (O) as well as "less is more" (O, C), "more friendly" (B,E), "we are a team" (E, G). My opinion is that it could limit at a future stage Ballet Y's evolutionary creativity (Halton, 2004). Indeed, Ballet Y's horizon, as a touring company, is larger than its homebase.

### **9.1.3/a Space and Time**

I now consider Ballet Y in terms of its spatial and temporal aspects. In modern physics, Einstein's theory defines gravitation as a curvature of spacetime. As a ballet company, it uses and crosses many physical spaces (studios, orchestra rehearsing hall, storage, theater backstage and performing stages, etc...). There is however, a specific place, a nexus for communication, information and food, Ballet Y's canteen. It is also the place where most of the relational leadership takes place (Solia-Wadman, 2007). Time structures the day-to-day life of a dancer, from class to the evening performance (Bull, 2011). Time also limits dancer's relatively short career. As a ballet company, time is linked to tradition and as B puts it "tradition should be a springboard" and should not hold the company back. M is very much pushing the art form forward and A's echoes the dynamic vision for the company with these words: "It is always ambitious. This is a company with heritage, 65 years of existence but it is also seen as a modern youthful company".

Class is both a spatial and temporal constituent behind the scenes. For dancers, it is the start of the day, it is also, as F develops, a 'transitional space' in the sense of Winnicott. F describes "it is the time when as a dancer when you really check in with yourself, with your body, and how you are feeling and you set yourself up for the day to do whatever you need to do. And it is when you fine tune and can develop your technique or lose it [laugh], it is when you can build strength,[...] it is full training really. It is also, I think the big part of it as well, why dancers like it, it is just time for you, and really you shut out the world, you shut out everything else, you are not, maybe the teacher will give you corrections, or maybe not but it is really your time for you to work, to know what part you work on, so it is very much your time, so I think it is quite a nice thing" (F, I- 26'53).

How do you sustain emotions in organization structure? At Ballet Y it also comes down to individual postures, encapsulating many facets from the EQ Edge (Stein & Book, 2006). Let's zoom into a few specific traits: empathy (D, A, E), and tolerance to ambivalence (F,E,N). As D puts it "With creative organization, they shy away from those definite, it's one thing or another, they revel in the shades of grey, they love it and they embrace it" (D, I-3'25).

## **9.2 Five reinforcing factors**

Equally important for creative organization and team work are selflessness, mutual respect, playfulness, containment and boundary management.

### **9.2.1 Selflessness**

According to Dambrun and Ricard, selflessness is a sign of psychological well-functioning and a source of authentic durable happiness (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). There were many vignettes of selflessness in the narratives of Ballet Y informants especially when it comes to their interaction with artists. On the other side this is what F describes: "Corps de ballet work really for it to go well, you have to work as a team, they can't really be individuals, it doesn't work, so it is a little bit selfless, it is not really about you, it is about what it makes it look good, it is about everyone moving as one person [...] but when it works well when everyone really works together it is actually a fantastic feeling" (F, I-Part II-7'01).

### **9.2.2 Mutual respect**

B describes how she partners with M: "Well, it is based very much on mutual respect [...] so understanding that you have two different spheres of expertise, that you respect each other for being really both good at what you are doing" (B, I-17'06). Respect is a recurring theme that every people I interviewed mentioned. It filters down, below the leadership team. D says: "people assume you will be great at your job unless proved otherwise. And there is a real appreciation for people who do things well [...] There is a huge amount of respect for people's different talents" (D, I-24'44).

### **9.2.3 Playfulness**

On many occasions, in the studio and in the office, I noticed evidence of humor. Most of my informants referred to it as a distinct element of Ballet Y's atmosphere (B, F, A). O notices: "There is a good sense of humor here". Beyond verbal jokes, kinaesthetic joking happened in the studio, canteen, and the corridor. I agree with Diamond that playfulness is a sign of organizational well-being (Diamond, 1993). It serves the purpose of distancing oneself as well as coping with anxiety created by authority figure. This was the successful strategy and healthy posture E used to deal with a challenging guest choreographer who chose to 'make her sweat' and keep people in Ballet Y in suspense about his involvement in a long-planned Master Class.

#### **9.2.4 Containment**

O with his words explains what Bion describes as the container function in managing anxiety of peers and employees (Meltzer, 2004): "Because of the company everybody is working under a lot of stress all the time, we never have enough managers, never enough time, enough resources, so things become really stressful. I kind of don't show it, that's my job, [...] we just kind of sail majestically like swan through all, whatever". (O, I-33'56).

#### **9.2.5 Boundary management**

A significant element of system psychodynamic perspective comes from Kurt Lewin's open system theory (Lewin, 1947). Organizations are indeed dependent and influenced by its environment, importing and exporting different qualities and dynamics across boundaries. Czander stresses the importance for leadership to manage boundaries for organization to survive: "Failure to do so will precipitate internal stress and disharmony, and will make it difficult for the organization to adapt to its environment in an efficient and effective manner" (Czander, 1993, p.209).

During an external creativity workshop end of October, M explained her role as managing boundaries and bridging creative spaces: "As an artistic director you are there to challenge someone else's vision. You are there to drive them into the direction that vision can actually fit into the personality, the identity of a group and in [Ballet Y] we are 70 dancers, 60 musicians in the orchestra, so it is not a small company. And we have a long history, 70 years [...] that's the most challenging part of my job now [...] how do I please this genius, how do I entitle him or enable him to create a really good piece of work that he can be proud of but that also fits into the artistic ability of a company?" (M, D7-6'01).

#### **9.3 Below the surface**

Below the surface, I noticed two meaningful abstract spaces which illustrate how leaders cooperate to harness creativity and sustainable economic growth at Ballet Y.

The first abstract space relates to Freud's spatial and geographical model (Meltzer, 2004). M forms a triad with Ballet Y's executive director and Ballet Y's chairman that embodies the drive for the company's future and its 'structural leadership'. The association I made whilst listening to their speeches was a 'pas de trois' (ballet figure for three persons) between the Id, the Artistic Director's instincts and impulse, the super-ego, the Chairman reinforcing Ballet Y values and 'conscience' and the ego, the Executive Director acting according to the 'reality principle' and balancing between the two.

The second one is created by the dual leadership structure and offers space for individual and group development (N, E, C, O). The building of the business structure alongside the artistic team triggers sometimes ambiguity, an intermediate space for people to engage (D, N, C, E).

Passion, artistic excellence and talent development are grounded in the reality of a flexible national and international business model for Ballet Y: "If you start with the artistic vision, so you are working



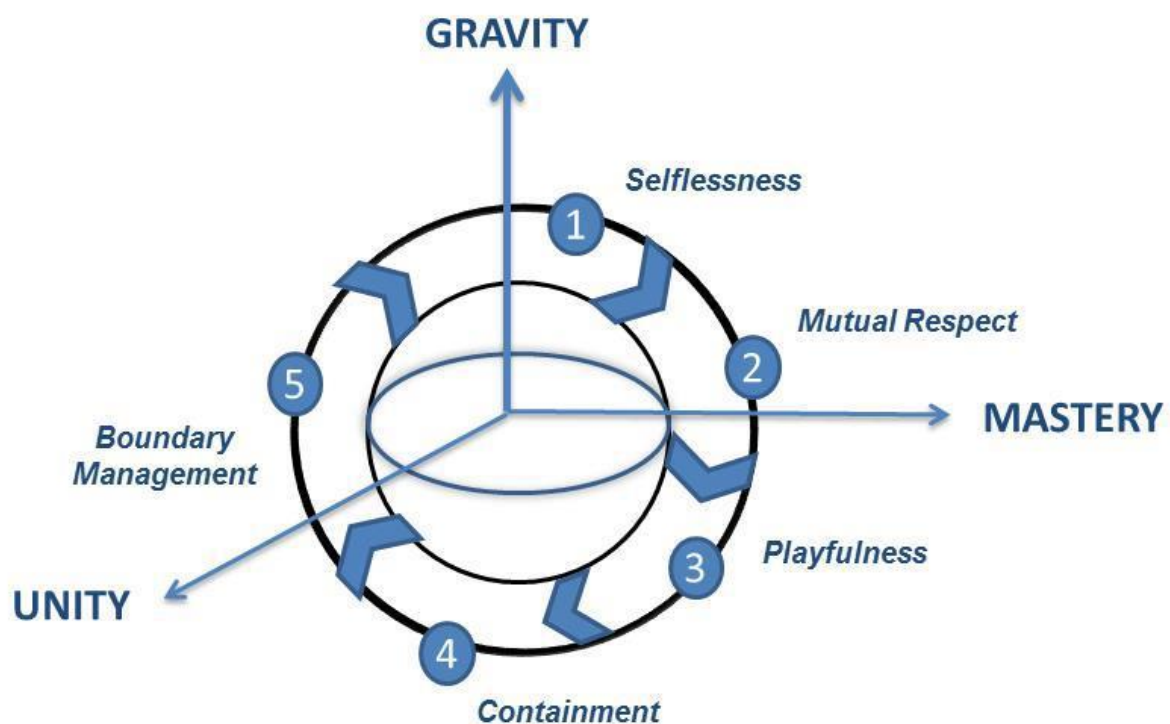
3 or 4 years out planning but you are trying to make sure that you are keeping the right balance between ballet and dance, between traditional and modern [...] One of our challenges in constructing the new repertoire is to keep a bigger range of ballet in our repertoire so we can take advantage of different sorts of venues. One of the things that the dancers and indeed the whole organization have been so proud of was [Ballet Y's latest production performed at a London venue but also at a UK festival]. It had an extraordinary impact on the whole organization and particularly on the dancers, and that has its own creative feedback" (B, I- 21'35).

#### **9.4 Curtain call**

Above the surface, Ballet Y organization follows very much the model developed by Chiapello to manage innovation in artistic enterprises along four modes of control: motivation (self-control), interpersonal relations (control through gift, affective loop), shared values (symbols) and structure (organic vs mechanist). I agree with her statement that "the paradox is that these four sources of control, which break away from traditional management, are today part of the reflection of the most-modern management" (Chiapello, 1997, p.76). Quoting Mohrman and Quam, Franz reminds that the role of the organization structure is to provide teams with Direction, Relevant Communication and Authority in decision making (Franz, 2012, p.97). At Ballet Y the organization structure was described as "fluid" (F), "not formulaic" (C), under construction (D) and "organic" (B).

To capture the emotional dynamics and undertow of this organization, I propose connecting the three dimensions that emerged: Mastery, Unity and Gravity to bring to the surface the continuum flow of energy, high and low.

The Diagram below - 3D representation of Leadership in Creative Organization - illustrates the main findings of my case-study.



What is unique to Ballet Y is that these 3 leadership dimensions are embodied by key significant authority figures: Mastery, the Artistic Director; Unity, the Executive Director and Gravity, the

Chairman. Resources (financial and reputational), energy and the team are kept nurturing the company through reinforcing factors. In the case of Ballet Y, five factors emerged: selflessness, mutual respect, playfulness, containment and boundary management.

Energy in the rehearsal studio was quite high at the start of the second week of September, after the summer break. It was a different emotional and physical texture I experienced during the preparation of the festive season. Over the six months I engaged with my case study on and off, at that specific context and time frame, Ballet Y appeared to come with a psychological circulation of pride and playfulness. Occasionally, I noticed traces of problematic side effects like pain and 'moquerie' (MC2). The warmth, camaraderie and openness of Ballet Y members, 'outside in' and 'inside out' portray a delicate texture of 'unpretentious professionalism'. Its leadership is aware of the importance emotional dynamics to contain and integrate bright and dark sides and overcome potential structural fracture. Leading to greatness a creative organization like Ballet Y requires not only aesthetic leadership but also graceful choreography of the emotional dynamics

## **10. Limitations**

Whilst my researcher role is a positive foundation for this case study, this research project does have some limitations, inherent to the choice I made to carry an in-depth study of a single organization in one specific country, the UK.

Time imposed also constraints and limited the number of observations I could reasonably make and my interactions with the company over half of Ballet Y's season. For example I was not able to experience the company's outreach program.

Finally it is possible that the specific attributes of the organization, one of UK premier ballet company have influenced the research process.

## **11. Future Research**

These limitations also suggest directions for future research. I would like to suggest spending more time with Ballet Y to capture at least one year and take the opportunity to follow the company on tour. With more time in the field, another choice of research methodology, like organizational ethnography, could make sense.

It would be very useful to study more ballet and dance organizations to compare and contrast findings. Especially, one could look at varying different organizational characteristics like size, shareholder structure and/or repertoire (western ballet versus eastern dance). Equally interesting would be to compare results with other companies operating in different countries.

I would also recommend extending the research field to other performing art organizations, like theatre, opera, orchestra and the visual arts to explore further the 3D representation of leadership in creative organizations.

Finally, it would be valuable to build further knowledge on all axes and reinforcing factors by sampling dance companies together with other creative corporate.

## **12. Conclusion**

I carried my research project between end of May and the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014, focusing on an in-depth exploratory case- study of one of the world leading ballet companies. My interviews, observations and analysis of materials led to valuable findings. My study provides insights of individuals involved in transforming a traditional ballet company into an artistic creative and economically sustainable organization, their interpersonal relationships and group dynamic in a specific context and time.

Three key recurrent themes emerged, Mastery, Unity and Gravity which form the 3D representation of the emotional organizational inner-world. The 'holding environment' is reinforced by 5 factors: Selflessness, Mutual Respect, Playfulness, Containment and Boundary Management. Ballet Y leadership is able and keen to maintain spinning a net positive emotional dynamic far from the drama of 'acid dance' and other toxic mental trap.

Guy Cools, reflecting on his collaboration with the Akram Khan company, refers to Daniel Sibony's definition of dance as "a movement in between two bodies: a 'body-memory' and a 'body-present' (Cools, 2006). Cools writes "The movement the dancer makes between his body-memory and his present body is an 'appeal' to the spectator to do the same, that is by viewing and sensing the present-a(c)tion, to remember its past, its origin, its meaning" (Cools, 2006). Parallels can be drawn into leadership for creativity. The oscillation between the system-memory and the system-present is the essence of creativity outside in and inside out the organization. Sensing the emotional waves, patterns and rhythm in an organizational context allow leaders to lead gracefully and master the inner-world choreography of the organization they steward.

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# An exploration of Barnett's analysis of the 'ecological' university (2011) and the potential contribution of arts-based pedagogy and knowledge

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## Abstract

This paper complements a workshop at the Art of Management 2016 conference which was designed to encourage the participants to explore their own felt experience as academics and practitioners engaged in arts-based practices in university and other organisational contexts. It explores historical, cultural, strategic and pedagogical themes related to the nature of knowledge within and beyond the universities and business schools, with particular reference to Barnett's (2011) analysis of different forms of *Being a University*. I conclude by positioning the current arts-in-management debate (eg Darsø, 2004; Adler, 2006, 2010, 2015; Bartunek and Carboni, 2006; Kaiser and Kaplan, 2006; Tung, 2006; Gallos, 2008; Barry, 2008; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009; Colby *et al.*, 2011; Schiuma, 2011; Sutherland, 2013) within the context of Barnett's analysis, finding that the arts-in-management movement aligns closely to Barnett's definition of the feasible utopia of an 'ecological' university which engages with the world and aims to make a difference through the nature and depth of its research and teaching, and by accommodating the insights of staff with multiple academic identities.

## Introduction

This paper was informed by a pedagogical research project related to a module entitled 'Creativity and the Creative Industries', part of an interdisciplinary Masters in Innovation, Creativity and Leadership. To summarise, my emerging conclusions from that study include that experiential, workshop-based encounters with the arts led by expert practitioners and arts-based assignments can offer management students these conditions and outcomes:

- 1) Presenting, embodied, imaginal experiences (Heron, 1992; Claxton, 2015)
- 2) A context within which the students encounter their own learning processes through reflection and personal/interpersonal narrative (Clarke, 2008; Darsø, 2004; James and Brookfield, 2014)
- 3) Invitations to identify, express and 'make' metaphors of personal and professional identity which both provide aesthetic distancing and act as transitional objects (Edwards, 2010; Winnicott, 1974; Pässilä and Vince, 2012)
- 4) Initiatives which demand a reflexive approach from educators and facilitators, whether within HE and in other organisational contexts (Brookfield, 2010; Fleming, 2012; Foucault, 1980)
- 5) Potentially powerful learning tools which can better equip students to address complex, 'VUCA' challenges, and which call for an extension of the curriculum of the traditional MBA (Adler, 2010, 2015; Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Sutherland, 2013).

In this paper, I aimed to contribute to the growing arts-in-management literature by reviewing the place of arts-informed innovations within the broader higher education (HE) context and well as the current and potential business school. I conclude by briefly reviewing the implications of this discussion for the integration of arts-based pedagogy and research in management education.

### Theoretical framing

To frame this discussion, I first review Barnett's (2011) analysis of the past and potential future 'being' and 'becoming' of the university as a cultural and anarchic entity and of the knowledge generated within universities. He identified four types of universities which, through both teaching and research, expressed different values and views of knowledge; and discussed aspects of all of them as 'feasible utopias', with both positive and negative aspects:

- The largely historical 'ivory tower' or 'metaphysical' university (which produced 'knowledge-for-itself'/'knowledge-in-itself')
- The 'professionalised', 'corporate' or 'bureaucratic' university (producing 'knowledge-for-itself'/'knowledge-in-the-world')
- The 'entrepreneurial' university (seeking to generate 'knowledge-in-the-world'/'knowledge-for-the-world')
- The 'developmental', 'therapeutic' or 'ecological' university (aiming to produce 'knowledge-in-the-world'/'knowledge-for-the-world') (Barnett, 2011, p.31).

Barnett argued that the modern university has evolved to be primarily a scientific institution, both in the nature of its research and teaching and in its mindsets and values. Its possibilities of the university appear to have become limited and constricted through the managerial and entrepreneurial demands on universities in their increasingly competitive global environment, characterised also by overwhelming complexity and the ever-increasingly volume of scholarly production. However, applying Heidegger's theorisations in *Being and Time* (1962), Barnett challenged this view to argue for the 'infinite' possibilities available to the contemporary university: their 'boundaries' were becoming more and more 'open to negotiation' (2011, p.13), demanding fundamental redefinitions at this 'existential moment for universities' (2011, p.14). Citing Maxwell (2008, pp.16–17), he called for a shift towards 'wisdom-inquiry' from 'knowledge-inquiry' (2011, p.66) which embraces and 'holds within itself' (Barnett, 2011, p.66) expressions of both dissensus and consensus within the university (Readings, 1996).

As part of his discussion, Barnett also explored how the concept of space might provide fruitful insights. Extending Lefebvre's focus on different types of space within universities, including 'pictural, musical or plastic spaces' (1991, p.91), Barnett saw these as fruitful aspects of universities' self-evaluation of their 'being' and potential for 'becoming':

1. 'Intellectual and discursive space'
2. 'Epistemological space'
3. 'Pedagogical and curricular space'
4. 'Ontological space' (Barnett, 2011, pp.76–7)

Though all of these are potentially relevant to the introduction of arts-based practices in management education, I found his definition of pedagogical and curricular space to be especially pertinent, including to question 'just what spaces are to be granted to students such that they may strive authentically to become their own persons?', and 'what space do course teams have in which to initiate new kinds of course, free from ideological or discursive and even power-laden constraint (not dictated by frozen ideas of "skills" or "outcomes")?' (Barnett, 2011, p.77). He also questioned the implications of the increasingly 'fluid ontological space' in which the teaching team was likely to include practitioners, curriculum designers or managers who might not define themselves as 'academics', or could take on 'several academic identities', a situation which may offer 'both peril *and* liberation' (Barnett, 2011, p.77). This view of a 'liquid university' might seem to approach post-modern definitions of a 'value-free' university, open to the world (eg Smith and Webster, 1997), but Barnett cautioned that this would be 'naïve': 'sheer liquid-ness is insufficient to warrant the title of "university"' (Barnett, 2011, p.119). Instead, each university must define its own ethical stance while encouraging its students towards 'a place of "authoritative uncertainty"' (2011, p.124) where they

could manage their uncertainties through reflective and artistic practices: 'The student moves into a new place through a kind of *epistemological therapy*, achieved not least through the powers of their own critical self-reflection (encouraged through their programme of studies)' (2011, p.125). As a feasible utopia, the university would then encourage its students to develop their own maturity through effective curriculum design and teaching; and so contribute to wider '*social therapy*' through which local and even global, networked societies can develop 'better informed' narratives (2011, p.128) by 'pedagogising' the internet (2011, p.128). In Barnett's conception, the 'ecological' university, with echoes of the metaphysical university, can embrace the 'iconoclastic' potential to influence society more broadly (2011, p.149), pursuing wisdom and 'energised' by both a 'leap of faith' and a commitment to the value of the knowledge it generates (2011, p.148), encompassing but extending scientific knowledge and sustained by an imaginative vision:

'Valid forms of knowing themselves stretch out, and are potentially infinite. The poet, the ballet dancer, the midwife, the Eskimo and the mystic: all are recognised as having valid forms of knowledge.' (Barnett, 2011, p.150)

'The ecological university is none other than the fullest expression of the idea of the university. It is the fullest realisation of the university's *being-possible* (to return to the Heideggerian expression...).' (Barnett, 2011, p.151)

In my Conclusion below, I return to this review of Barnett's theorising of the university to discuss its potential relevance to the arts in management research and teaching.

### **Higher education: the institutional context**

This section reviews current debates related to both the history and current conditions of higher education, before considering the business school in the following section. This discussion is focused mainly on British and US experience, with some comparisons to historical and contemporary university practice in other parts of the world.

The sustainability of academic institutions' social and educational role, especially cross-curricular, research-excellent western institutions which aspire to emulate Harvard, was increasingly questioned from the 1980s onwards, and especially after the 2008 recession, by policy-makers, funding bodies, and even senior academics themselves (eg Bok, 2006; Khurana, 2007; Christensen and Eyring, 2011). The institution as it had evolved from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was increasingly challenged to more closely reflect the needs of employers as reflected in students' learning outcomes from both undergraduate and postgraduate study. As just one example, 'employers' were mentioned 28 times as key stakeholders alongside 'students' and 'taxpayers' in the May 2016 White Paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy* which set out the rationale to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework audit to be linked to undergraduate recruitment without fee caps (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016). Such 'vocationalism' (Land, 2015) was a big step away from the historical traditions of the scholarly pursuit and sharing knowledge for its own, purportedly 'value-free' ends. Humboldt is credited as a founding father of the modern academy with his 1810 definition of the aims of the university in Berlin (now named after him) which provided a humanist education beyond the religious and classical education of older establishments. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw this model adopted more broadly in Europe and the US, though with a rigid emphasis on educating an elite limited by class and gender, being educated to serve the needs of government, empire and church, with a reluctant acceptance of the need to educate medics alongside 'gentlemen' who did not need to earn their living (Baron, 2005; Dyhouse, 1995; Endersby, 2008; Schwartz, 2011). From the 1960s onwards, the current strategic environment of higher education became established, with a populist expansion of provision first in the US then globally. By all measures, higher education is a global success story in its increasing reach, with enrolments in the year 2000 in some developing countries approaching 80 per cent (Schofer and Meyer, 2005, citing UNESCO, 2004).

The model of a research intensive university which delivers a recognised, consistent curriculum worldwide has proven to be highly resilient and consistent, reproduced through the development and promotion of individuals with similar skills who excelled in their achievements within the current system (Christensen and Eyring, 2011). Many shared conditions which transcend local variations can be seen in the strategic conditions within which universities currently operate, including:

- greatly expanded student demand and provision since the Second World War, with up to 20% of the eligible global population estimated to be able access to HE in the year 2000 (Schofer and Meyer, 2005), though still with limited opportunities in many developing economies
- increasing standardisation in the global curriculum with the increasing dominance of American HE practices including standardised tests as selection processes, modular programme designs, and the use of Grade Point Averages as granular tools to assess individual student outcomes (eg Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016, p.47)
- the rising cost of HE for students in most countries, with some associated student loan arrangements
- growing expectations of a direct relationship between HE study and employability, with governmental and intergovernmental policies emphasising on STEM and IT subjects over the human and social sciences: as an indication of the current emphasis on STEM subjects in UK government policy, business and management research funding declined by nearly 8.5% between 2010–11 and 2013–14 to just below £64 million, while funding for mathematics increased by 24%, and both civil engineering and IT, systems science and computer software by about 15.5% (Association of Business Schools, 2016, p.9) – a policy shift which was also designed to encourage prospective students to reverse the continuing decline in IT student numbers (Universities UK, 2014, Table 4; Universities UK, 2015)
- the introduction of quality assurance disciplines linked to the definition of increasingly granular learning outcomes and student satisfaction measures as undergraduate and postgraduate level
- the adoption of business disciplines in managing HE institutions themselves across the sector (Altbach *et al.*, 2009; Association of Business Schools, 2014 and 2016).

Many debates over the nature of the knowledge taught by these institutions, its relevance to society and its impact on the students who complete university courses were initiated outside of the academy, some of them reflecting ‘return-on-investment’ arguments which were arguably themselves products of the curricula of business schools since the 1970s (Khurana, 2007; Ferraro *et al.*, 2005). Policy makers increasingly called for state-funded academics to cross their ingrained disciplinary silos and work together with practitioners to produce applied, interdisciplinary research, and share the fruits of such research in their teaching. Doing this successfully presented a major cultural challenge to academics whose research success and scholarly reputations depend on excellence within single disciplines and established definitions of research excellence, including in the award of a PhD (OECD, 1972; Blackwell *et al.*, 2009; McEwen *et al.*, 2009). Though the effect for an academic of stepping outside their discipline has been likened to living as a foreigner in a new culture (Bauer 1990, p. 110), many research-excellent UK universities including Manchester and Southampton introduced cross-discipline module options along the lines of US undergraduate provision – raising the question of whether their students will or even should aspire to reconcile their learning across different disciplines (McEwan *et al.*, 2009; Blackwell *et al.*, 2009; Chettiparamb, 2007).

Interdisciplinary subject areas became increasingly important to universities with the expansion of applied, more vocational postgraduate education. As confirmed in the most recent HEFCE figures for England and Wales, postgraduate demand has remained strong despite increasing costs, with a 46% increase in total postgraduate numbers between 2002/03 and 2012/13, and in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences programmes (including business and management) from 79,900 in 2002/03 to 121,030 in 2013-14 – an increase of 51%, representing 78% of the total postgraduate numbers, though with a decline from peak intakes in 2010/11 (165,155 in total, 127,125 in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences). International students played a major role in sustaining such educational offerings, especially in the US, the UK and Australia; and increasing visa restrictions in England since 2010 have

been another major strategic factor for the universities (Association of Business Schools, 2014). From the 1980s onwards, business schools became the main providers of applied postgraduate education, arguably even the 'cash cows' of the sector with the expansion and continuing dominance of the MBA (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007, p.8).

Though government funding had shifted so strongly to STEM subjects in the UK, student enrolments on 'business and administrative' programmes continued to grow: between 2004–5 and 2011–12, it was the largest category of choice for undergraduates and postgraduates, with an increase of nearly 16% to over 336,000 students (Universities UK, 2014, Table 4). These increases in the UK were to some extent at the expense of humanities courses, with the increase in business enrolments reflecting women's more vocational choices for their studies (Mandler, 2015).

The status of the university as the key provider of knowledge was also increasingly brought into question with the 'critical turn' from the late 1980s, with scholars across disciplines arguing that all knowledge must be acknowledged as uncertain, ambiguous and constructed in this 'post-normal' age, even knowledge about our 'selves' (Barnett, 1997; Bruner, 1991, 2002; Gergen, 2000). Applied and globally urgent debates such as the nature of climate change and appropriate responses to it (Millner, Dietz and Heal, 2013), meanwhile, showed that the same uncertainties encompassed scientific knowledge in an intellectual environment characterised by both complexity and the continuing uncertainties of quantum physics (eg Bohm, 1980). Contrary to the traditional modes of teaching in universities, these arguments suggested, universities could not offer secure, complete knowledge to their students, even within single disciplines; and must therefore engage them in that uncertainty and associated debates, and do so in terms which made sense to them in the context of the world around them (Land, 2015). And the urgency seemed to be accelerating: expert commentators such as Schwab (2016), for example, argued that the world itself had become characterised by such disruptive innovation that we were now in a 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', a robotic age which demanded increasingly sophisticated IT and design skills.

The universities' potential to contribute to 'life-long learning' for increasing numbers of students was widely heralded in 1990s, and enshrined in the 1999 Bologna Agreement, which established a European Qualifications Framework and aimed to introduce comparability, shared provision and transferability of university qualifications across Europe (European Higher Education Area, 2010). In this context, as also endorsed in the pending TEF legislation for English and Wales (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016), to achieve programme accreditation by employer bodies became an increasing, audited priority for universities, at the same time as awarding bodies such as Creative Skillset suffered major funding reductions and the considerable costs of accreditation shifted to the relevant courses themselves – effectively creating a dual market where only large courses in rich institutions would be able to apply and achieve relevant 'kite marks', and where the university's role in the increasing emphasis on graduate apprenticeships was also as yet unclear (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016). In this context of uncertainty and change, there was a growing need for educated adults to continue to learn and develop their skills, a need which can be seen as a major strategic opportunity for universities, especially in areas relating professional education such as business schools (Canals, 2011, p.26).

Since 2000, the research and pedagogical practices of most current universities have found themselves almost universally criticised and facing constant change. Policy makers, funding bodies and practitioner communities, especially in professional and IT contexts, called for universities to focus primarily on research and teaching which could be 'evidenced' in quantitative terms and applied directly to current practice (eg in the UK Browne *et al.*, 2010 and Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016); and those calls were linked directly to funding and establishing the legal frameworks within which universities functioned. These conditions were most sharply seen in the pressures on US State universities to give Creationist explanations equal weighting with evolutionary theory and to withdraw funding from research and teaching informed by critical scholarship; while the students as role as 'consumers' was institutionalised at national level in the UK, drawing on their feedback as a measure of staff management and even state funding for their programmes, schools and even institutions (eg Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2011 and 2016).

From within the academy, meanwhile, many adult educators working in the critical tradition promoted reflective goals and practices with the specified aim of questioning such commercial and policy demands on higher education (eg Brookfield, 2015a, 2015b). Though both long-standing and more recent contributions to this debate emphasised the role of arguably unquantifiable educational practices in building and sustaining a just society and a democratically responsive, ethical citizenship (e.g. Dewey, 1916; Brookfield and Holst, 2011), its context become one of audits and measurement, linked directly to the state funding upon which public universities worldwide continued to rely. As Barnett (2011) pointed out, more innovative definitions of the university were to be found in the private sector, outside the debates within publicly funded institutions, but the majority of student and faculty experiences of HE were dictated by the public sphere.

Some commentators saw disruptive innovation as the biggest strategic challenge to the future model of universities as the main providers of graduate and postgraduate education. Christensen and Eyring (2011) especially highlighted the rise of online providers in the US, citing the rise in student numbers at the University of Phoenix to highlight the urgency of rethinking the sustainability of the generalist, expert research university. The more recent experience of such online providers, however, confirms the difficulties of learning online, and the continuing role of campuses, mentors and being part of a physical learning community: from a high of 460,000, journalists estimated the University of Phoenix's enrolment numbers to have fallen to 213,000 in 2014 (Jackson, 2015, citing Gillespie, 2015). This is not to ignore the promise of digital innovations within university teaching, or its increasing role in student management as well as pedagogy (Laurillard, 2012); but to position the role of interaction-enabled teaching within the broader context of students' experience of face-to-face teaching.

What *is* a university? That remains the fundamental question against which studies such as this must be seen. A recent statement by March, a highly respected business school dean, tellingly summarised the continuing need to remember the humanistic origins and function of the university as an institution, despite the financial and social demands with which it is assessed:

'... learning is a manifestation of faith in what it means to be a human being.... It is a place where learning and scholarship are revered, not primarily for what they contribute to personal or social well-being, but for the vision of humanity they symbolize, sustain and pass on.'  
(March, 2003, p.206)

### **The business school**

To establish the context within which the arts in management movement is located, in this section I focus more specifically on the current strategic conditions facing business schools.

#### **Historical context**

The history of the business schools in the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflected the predominance of US models of business, especially in the practices of global venture finance companies. There can be no doubt of the scale of teaching activity within global business schools: the established entry examination for postgraduate management studies, the GMAT, was required in 2014 by 5,700 programmes worldwide, including both MBAs and the smaller but growing market for more specialised Masters (Schoenfeld, 2016, p.4). The aspirants are surveyed annually by the Graduate Management Admission Council, and their analysis for 2015 categorized their ambitions as 'Career enhancers' (34%), 'Career switchers' (38%) and 'Aspiring entrepreneurs' (28%, a growing category). Entry to the most prestigious business schools worldwide was highly selective and sought after – though there was evidence that once there the students are more concerned with networking to establish their future career prospects than attending classes. In Khurana's critical terms, such 'academic credentialling' defined the business school as more a 'gatekeeper rather than a transmitter of knowledge and values' (2007, p.352).

The status quo appeared to be changing rapidly from the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. European schools were credited with some of the most innovative current practices including partnerships, internationalisation, shared provision across the European region, and, more recently, pedagogical innovations including the arts (Barsoux, 2000; Fraguero and Thomas, 2011; Thomas, 2012; Amdam *et al.*, 2003). Canals concluded that European schools represented a 'European identity and style in management education' (2011, p.8), e.g. SKEMA in France, AALTO in Finland and Reading/Henley in

the UK; and both IESE and ESADE in Barcelona, the first funded by Opus Dei in partnership with Wharton and Harvard, and the second supported by the Jesuits (Thomas *et al.*, 2013). INSEAD had been especially innovative, seeking to show themselves to be a 'business school for the world' by establishing a campus in Singapore and another in Abu Dhabi, and partnerships with Wharton (US), Tsinghua University (China) and Fundação Dom Cabral (Brazil), with funding from the governments of Singapore and the UAE (Thomas *et al.*, 2013).

There were many other examples of innovative partnerships, including the TRIUM consortium (TRIUM, 2016) which was launched in 2002 as a joint Global Executive MBA taught by academics from New York University, Hautes Écoles Commerciales, Paris and the London School of Economics. The website of the Kellogg–HKUST Executive MBA (Kellogg–HKUST, 2016) celebrated its top rankings over several years, with a curriculum which combined modules from of the two institutions to appeal to executives in the fast-growing Asian marketplace.

Meanwhile, local business schools in South Asia and Asia had grown dramatically in number, reputation and student numbers (Brailsford, 2012), prompting commentators to warn that business schools as currently constituted in the developed economies will need to innovate to survive. Thomas *et al.* (2013, pp.106, 107 and 115) compiled telling statistics and projections for the sector, suggesting that by 2020, China's economy was projected to be the largest global economy, but would be overtaken by India in 2050; that India already had over 3,000 private management schools, and would be the biggest MBA-level global provider by 2020; and that the Indian Schools of Business were already working in partnership with business schools from across the world, including for active student exchange programmes, and took over 500 MBA students annually with one of the highest global GMAT averages. Thomas *et al.* (2013) also cited Scrimenti's (2010, p.7) estimate that China would need 75,000 additional English-speaking MBAs over the next decade, many of them likely to be drawn from Western business schools.

Thomas *et al.* also cited global demographics to support their argument for the need for business schools to reflect global trends, including meeting the distinct needs of older, more experienced students, providing shorter programmes, and finding ways to deliver quality programmes in the face of competition for expert academic staff as the business school sector grows globally (Thomas *et al.*, 2013, p.99).

The literature offered numerous examples of innovations within MBA teaching which could begin to meet these challenges. Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2010), for example, described an innovative creativity programme run for the CIA around data for Firefox downloads provided by Mozilla Corp. The project involved 'observation', 'brainstorming' and 'prototyping', all implementing an 'ideation' process to identify and test potential designs. They quoted one of the instructors' description of the programme as being akin to 'a traditional Beaux Arts class', with everyone involved generating and critiquing ideas and solutions as they developed, a process which they described as 'an iterative process that is characteristic of design thinking' (Datar *et al.*, 2010, p.147). They concluded from this example that business schools could respond to current skills needs by embedding 'emergent discovery' within their curriculum. Their other examples included the Ross School's Multidisciplinary Action Projects, 'complex projects in ambiguous contexts that require students to identify problems, navigate organizational politics, and formulate multidisciplinary solutions' (2010, p.149); Harvard's Leadership and Corporate Accountability module which included a reflective analysis of project outcomes from both 'the shareholder maximization perspective and the multiple stakeholder perspective' (2010, p.160); and Stanford's Critical Analytical Thinking core module (one of 7) in a 2007 MBA revision, with a 'deep and tailored' second year (2010, p.303) – an exception to what they described as a general difficulty faced by US courses in providing an integrated, applied curriculum rather than a series of research modules (2010, p.323).

Despite these and other examples, many of the most creative innovations in the business school sector appeared to be emerging from private rather than publicly funded universities in the US, not least in their wholehearted exploitation of the opportunities of interactive learning. Not all such providers were private institutions: the Open University, Instituto de Empresa in Madrid, Henley's Open University Business School and the Warwick Business School had long-established reputations as

providers of distance and blended learning MBAs, for example. The University of Phoenix's online MBA was however perhaps the most telling illustration of both the scale of student demand for flexible, global business school education and the difficulties of successfully managing large-scale, purely online programmes. The largest of the fully online MBA providers in the US or UK, they enrolled over 350,000 students in 2009, about 150,000 more than the ten campuses of the University of California (Christensen and Eyring, 2011, p.8). Their highest year of enrolment was estimated by Gillespie (2015) as 460,000 in 2013, with a reduction to 213,000 in 2014 (Gillespie, 2015). The cost of study clearly was clearly also a major issue for many of their American students: while 12% of American students were enrolled in courses with private, distant providers such as Phoenix in 2013, they accounted for more than half of that year's student loan defaults (Gillespie, 2015, citing US federal data). Meanwhile, the Phoenix example has been emulated in India's Manipal University's introduction of an online MBA alongside its high-ranked engineering courses – an initiative which has already attracted students from 57 different countries looks set for impressive growth (University of Manipal, 2016).

Another initiative from a private provider might provide a model for business school innovation driven by an innovative approach to both the business curriculum and the management of academic staff. The Lorange Institute of Business Zurich was established by the former economist Peter Lorange (2005, 2010, 2012) in 2009 when he purchased GBSA Zurich. Its stated aims (Lorange Institute of Business, 2016) were to provide an immediately relevant curriculum to executives, with modules delivered flexibly and repeatedly during the year, each 'supervised by at least one faculty member who is a world leader in their field' and supported by 'a network of world class professors and experienced practitioners', all with 'many years of experience in training leaders' (Lorange Institute of Business, 2016). As Lorange described the aims in Thomas *et al.* (2013, p.132), they included catering for the needs of executive students for flexible teaching provision with blocks of teaching to explore 'living cases' in conversation with business leaders, all taught by top-rated scholars and practitioners who would be employed as consultants rather than staff members – and who would be either world-class researchers or practitioners. Acknowledging also, perhaps, that the qualification itself would not be core of the appeal of his new institute, he introduced a staged qualification, with the award of an 'Executive MSc' through one of six strands, any of which could be converted to an accredited MBA with the completion of additional credits: 'wealth management and management of financial institutions'; 'high-value goods marketing (luxury goods)'; 'shipping, with its emphasis on taking advantage of business cycles'; 'human resources management'; 'use of information technology and communications science to generate new business revenue'; and 'sustainable strategies' (Thomas *et al.*, 2013, p.130).

### **Critiques of business schools**

Since the 2001 Enron scandal, there had been a crescendo of critique of the business school, especially as represented by the behaviour and capabilities of MBA graduates from the top American business schools. As it was company policy at Enron to recruit top MBA graduates, the reputation of the MBA as a qualification was struck by 'Enron-itis': 'what these recruits lacked was a broader perspective of the role of business' (Starkey *et al.*, 2004, p.1526).

Pfeffer and Fong (2002) contributed to this debate by analysing innovative MBA-level syllabuses offered by small and private business schools, arguing that the major MBA providers had allowed their offerings to become both too distant from practice, and had positioned themselves within their universities as academic departments rather than professional schools. Given the many new, competitive entrants to the business school marketplace, they urged business schools to realign their curricula to reflect the needs of their potential students, and to generate research which reflected current business practices. Not to change might 'pose a substantial and growing threat to their continued prosperity, if not to their very existence' (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, p.93).

Mintzberg's (2004) widely quoted critique of the MBA defined management as a lived, craft experience which could not be conveyed in a classroom, and especially not through the study of cases; and challenged the efficacy of providing young postgraduates without management experience to learning experiences within a 'distorted' idea of management which had encouraged 'two dysfunctional styles of practice: *calculating* (overly analytical) and *heroic* (pretend art)' (Mintzberg, 2004, p.10) – the latter



through teaching and assessment practices in MBAs based on the verbal presentation of the students' analyses of case studies in competitive and even conflictual classroom contexts.

Sumatra Ghoshal (2005) linked the amoral behaviour of the Enron managers to the application of economic theories based on the work of Milton Friedman (2002). He called on business school academics to reconsider 'truth-claims based on extreme assumptions', and aim instead to 'reengage with the scholarships of integration, application, and pedagogy to build management theories that are broader and richer than the reductionist and partial theories we have been developing over the last 30 years' (2005, p.87). In 2011, after the 2008 financial crisis, Locke and Spender (2011) extended Ghoshal's argument, and showed how such business school theorising based purely on economics could be linked to financial managers' choices and ethics. The basic difficulty lay in the explanation such theories provided for how markets worked and how wealth would be created 'and collective good somehow arises as a by-product' (Starkey *et al.*, 2004, p.274). Instead, Starkey *et al.* argued for the teaching of law to 'serve as a more compelling, inclusive and realistic account of how management as stewardship can and should operate' (2004, p.279).

At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2007, before the financial crisis, Schwab, its founder, criticised business as a whole as being 'detached from society' (quoted in Starkey *et al.*, 2004, p.271). Khurana (2007) was also strongly critical of the language of business schools themselves and of AACSB reports which ignored the pedagogical context of the business school and described business school teaching as a 'value proposition' for its 'customers', i.e. students.

Focusing more directly on the MBA curriculum, Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2010) identified 'eight unmet needs' across MBA programs, including critical thinking, the fundamentals of the role and responsibilities of business, understanding 'the limits of models and markets', the need to develop global awareness and leadership skills, being able to integrate information and accurately identify and address issues that arose within an organisation, and 'acting creatively and innovatively' (Datar *et al.*, 2010, pp.8–9) – many of which present considerable pedagogical challenges.

Not all commentators were so critical: Derek Bok, former President of Harvard University, noted that 'among the faculties none has a greater sense of purpose than the business school' (Bok, 2006, p.6). Other scholars also argued that the business school could generate the innovations and reforms needed to sustain the future of the university itself, reflecting their position 'at the fault line where the future of the university and the future of society intersect' (Starkey *et al.*, 2004, p.1527). To realise this future, business school leaders and public-facing commentators would need to influence what Starkey *et al.* described as 'a crisis of trust in business, a surge of antagonism towards business... and, by implication, what business schools or at least their graduates, value' (Starkey and Hatchuel, 2014, p.273, citing Harvard Business Review, 2012).

### **Business schools and pedagogy**

As can be seen from this brief review of the strategic context of the business school, tensions between knowledge and practice have characterised their mission and practices since their foundation: do they exist to equip their graduates to 'know how' to perform in business, as managers or leaders; or is their primary aim to equip their graduates to 'know what' (Ryle, 1945) knowledge which is at the forefront of each element of their curricula? Such choices reflect the values of the individual academic teachers themselves, and also the shared values of their organisations (Handal and Lauvås, 1987). This section reviews previous research relating to the pedagogical practices of business schools, with a particular emphasis on Masters-level postgraduate offerings.

### **Pedagogical approaches**

The case study mode of reaching, strongly associated with the MBA and with Harvard in particular, had been developed and applied since the establishment of the Harvard MBA in the early 1900s. It had also been soundly criticised, not least by Mintzberg (2004), for developing skills in analysis and competitive presentation with reference to created, space-limited narrative cases which were 'bounded and prepackaged' (Datar *et al.*, 2010, p.95) and could not reflect the range of issues implicit in the real-life contexts under analysis. As Starkey *et al.* also pointed out, Harvard cases which focused on leadership at Enron and the Royal Bank of Scotland must call into question 'the ability of business

school “research” to generate a science of business or narratives of business worthy of respect’ (Starkey *et al.*, 2004, p.272).

Case studies were however only one aspect of the tools of management education, as analysed by Jain and Golosinski (2011, p.72) in their ‘Table 2’ (see below). The Note to the table argued that ‘Across time, each category grows cumulatively, incorporating earlier models and methods into later approaches’ – but, as Bok (2006) pointed out, much business school teaching continued to rely on lecturing. This might arguably continue to fulfil many students’ expectations of a business school experience, but had also fuelled global ‘interchangeable pedagogy’ and ‘Powerpoint teaching’ by management gurus (McKiernan and Wilson, 2014, p.260).

**Table 2: Evolution of management education**

Time period	Up to mid-1960s	Late 1960s to late 1990s	2000-2008	2009 and beyond
<b>Pedagogical tools used</b>	Case studies	Theoretical frameworks driven by academic research	Analytical frameworks and experiential global learning	Analytical frameworks, experiential global learning and renews risk management models
<b>Decision-making driven by</b>	Judgment and intuition	Data analytics	Business insights and corporate ethics	Business insights, corporate ethics and global challenges
<b>Focus on</b>	Business relevance	Academic rigor	Academic rigor and business relevance	Academic rigor, business relevance and social impact

**Source:** Jain and Golosinski, 2011, p.72

Jain and Golosinski also proposed four ‘pillars’ for the education of ‘responsible global leaders’ (Jain and Golosinski, 2011): ‘intellectual depth’ (defined as ‘thought leadership through coursework’. p.76), ‘experiential learning’ (‘team leadership through collaboration’, p.77) , ‘global perspectives’ (‘market leadership through cross-cultural diversity’, p.79) and ‘ethics values & people skills’ (‘civic leadership through community outreach and social responsibility’, p.80). Though more active pedagogies were implicit in these definitions, Jain and Golosinski did not consider the more participative or interpersonal learning outcomes, including simulations, role plays and group projects, that now form a key part of business-school curricula, especially in leadership programmes.

Like Jain and Golosinski, however, other commentators have also called for a broader interdisciplinary business curriculum which would integrate the social sciences, philosophy and the law; and for a global perspective which considered shared, global issues and developed the students’ cultural awareness. For success, such initiatives would also call for the integration of reflective practices and an explicit emphasis on the development of metacognition. Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010), for example, called for a more explicit recognition in curricula and pedagogical design of the role of the business school as an ‘identity workspace’.

I found Mintzberg’s (2004) emphasis on introducing the ‘art’ as well as the ‘craft’ of management practice into management studies as a more fruitful theme for the analysis of arts-based management education. In place of the ‘unbalanced MBA’, he recommended a curriculum which would balance ‘The three poles of managing’, with Art contributing ‘comprehensive synthesis, in the form of insights and visions’ (Mintzberg, 2004, p.93).

### **The future for business schools**

Most of the research commentators surveyed for this paper agreed that the business school model was on the point of transition involving more external partnerships (Starkey *et al.*, 2004) and internal consultancy, research and teaching collaborations to establish ‘*interdisciplinary innovation hubs* within universities’ which can generate applicable knowledge and equip students to aspire to careers which would be ‘*broadly significant*’ as well as ‘*materially successful*’ (Jain and Golosinski, 2011, p.69). Hommel and Thomas (2014) described the potential for such shifts to develop ‘T-shaped’ graduates with disciplinary knowledge of business studies combined with analytical skills informed by encounters with the and ‘having achieved significant *disciplinary breadth* through a liberal education involving

critical, synthetic and analytical thinking and appropriate *depth training* in the important functions and languages of management education' (Hommel and Thomas, 2014, p.25).

## Conclusions

The debates reviewed here have echoed Barnett's definition of the ecological university as a 'feasible utopia' (Barnett, 2011, p.7) in their concern with questions of knowledge and with the potential for universities and business schools, like their graduates, to aspire to '*[dare] to make the world a better and safer place*' (Jain and Golosinski, 2011, p.91). For example, Barnett's emphasis on 'wisdom-inquiry' rather 'knowledge-inquiry' (2011, p.66) was echoed in Weick's vision of the future of business school education emphasizing 'wisdom rather than vocation, character rather than technicalities, and mindfulness rather than rationality' (Weick, 2001, p.574); and in the risks identified by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum of educating 'technically competent people who have lost their ability to think critically, to examine themselves, and the respect the humanity and diversity of others' (Nussbaum, 1998, p.300).

The current calls for engagement with the world and making a difference, including in the arts-in-management debates, echo Barnett's definition of the potential for the ecological university:

'The ecological university does what it can, within its compass, to be a good for the world.'  
(Barnett, 2011, p.5)

For example, the debates reviewed here about the future of the university and the business school also emphasised concepts such as 'the good', especially with reference to teaching. Starkey *et al.* (2004) advocated an emphasis on 'shared' rather than share value, questioning for example the sustainability of shifting manufacturing round the world in pursuit of lower wage bills instead of generating 'clusters' of development (Porter and Kramer, 2011); other researchers within a more humanistic tradition called for business school teaching focussed on 'wisdom' and, essentially, gestalt experiences of 'being'/conscious engagement in the world – though this has attracted critiques (see for example Statler, 2014).

Barnett's analysis of the 'being' and potential 'becoming' of the university can also be extended to business schools and the current pressures upon them. Alongside the medical school, the business school encouraged the shift from the 'ivory tower' university to the 'entrepreneurial' university and, arguably, provided the analytical tools and managerial assumptions which underpinned the 'corporate' and 'bureaucratic' nature of the 'professionalised' university. Calls for greater depth of scholarship, especially from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, saw the business school emulate more of the overriding scientific goals of the modern university, and led to the distancing from business practice that inform current critiques of the MBA which led to curricula changes to embed consideration of ethical issues within the business school curriculum.

To review current arts in management scholarship in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, but its aspirational, ethical, transformational and at times spiritual arguments in favour of arts-based initiatives within management studies arguably embody the 'iconoclastic utopianism' which for Barnett characterised the potential of the ecological university (Barnett, 2011, p.149, citing Jacoby, 2005). To return to the theme of the associated conference workshop, many of the most vocal voices of the arts in management debate, including Nancy Adler, are also artists as well as management educators (cf Adler, 2015; Sutherland, 2013; Darsö, 2004) – and therefore speak from multiple academic identities, described by Barnett (2011, p.77) as a characteristic of the increasingly liquid and therapeutic as well as, potentially, ecological university.

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## The Appraisal of Power, the Power of Appraisal

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***“.....To explore, feel and express the felt, sensory and emotional aspects of management, leadership and daily organizational life”***

Bled Conference Publicity, 2016

A routine aspect of working life for most organisations is performance management, and one aspect of performance management is the annual or bi-annual appraisal process (called many things including performance reviews, staff development reviews etc). The effectiveness of this method of reviewing and ‘managing’ performance remains open to debate (Baker, T., 2013).

Jenny Knight and a colleague will perform a poem that will deal with the experience of the appraisal interview from the perspective of the manager as well as the member of staff being appraised. Jenny draws on Steven Berkoff’s theatrical approach and his commitment to the use of rhythm, repetition and silence to explore the power dynamics, the unspoken agendas, prejudices, thoughts and desires of both parties and the personal impact of such an interaction and process. The two performers will reveal aspects of themselves directly to the audience.

Baker (2013) describes appraisal meetings as potentially resulting on one-way monologues, and so Jenny has developed a performance where each party is locked into their own monologue, not always hearing or reacting to the other until finally some powerful conversation takes place.....

The performance will also draw on aspects of Brechtian theatre, playing directly to the audience and critically appraising the process of the appraisal, from the perspectives of power, truth and pain.

Appraiser (to be referred to as 1)

Appraisee (to be referred to as 2)

1.

*I’m doing an SDR today  
Appraisal, performance review, and I may  
Be some time in this room, getting very hot  
Move my table to one side and make sure there’s not  
A barrier between the two of us so  
We can’t share our perspectives, can’t use the GROW  
Model. Goal and reality, options, that stuff  
Have I moved the chairs and the table enough?  
All the papers will be on my lap here, I think  
And when he comes in here I’ll get him a drink  
Just some water, to put by his chair, and by mine,  
On the floor – yes – I think the whole thing will be fine*

2.

I'm sitting here  
Outside her door  
She'll call me in  
Just like before  
She'll move her desk  
She'll gaze at me  
I wonder if it's me she'll see  
I don't need this  
My life's a mess  
Things going on  
Causing me stress  
My job and I  
We rub along  
See eye to eye  
I'm right, it's wrong  
Don't need this talk  
A wasted day  
I wish this ache  
Would go away

**1.**

*My greeting is calm and I'm smiling at him  
I'm trying my best to be warm, welcoming  
My stomach turns over, my face feels quite hot  
The paperwork, chairs and the water – forgot  
To open the window, to let in the air  
We can't breathe in this workplace – I wave at his chair.  
An abandoned, relaxed and 'wherever' type wave  
He responds with a sigh and sits down. Must be brave.*

**2.**

I'm sitting here  
Inside her door  
She's waved me in  
And what is more  
She's pointed me  
Towards my chair  
I'm sitting here  
She's over there  
Her papers slipped  
Both of us sipped  
Water, just now.  
The floor's too low.  
She's breathing in  
We will begin

1.

*No table is reckless! My papers just slipped!  
I tried to look calm as I bent down and sipped  
At my water, as he did. I don't think he saw  
The mild panic in my face – or did he ignore  
It, or laugh at me, inwardly, knowing that I  
Am no good at this process – I don't know quite why.  
I'm the boss, I'm in charge and the ball's in my court  
I'll keep things professional, focused and short*

2.

She smiles at me  
God, make this quick  
Tell me it's good  
Then maybe pick  
An area for  
'Development'  
Something to change  
To 'implement'.  
Some this or that  
Some bla bla bla  
Then do the notes  
My mind is far  
Away from here  
This heated tomb  
This strip-lit,  
Suffocating room

1.

*I'll say something good. Then I'll tackle the 'weak'  
I'll leave lots of silences so he can speak  
I'll summarise, reflect back, use my EQ  
I've been on the training course – know what to do.  
His expression is blank and he stares past my face  
At the picture of me and the kids in some place  
By the sea – it's my favourite – in a white frame  
I wish I were there now, playing a game  
With them both, like we used to – with a beach ball  
I wasn't at home when they learned how to crawl...*

2.

Her and her kids  
I wonder where?  
Looks lovely – wish  
That I were there.

She finally died  
A long, slow death  
I wasn't there  
For her last breath  
I was at work  
In open plan  
Doing some stuff  
Don't think I can  
Remember what.  
I didn't leave.  
Waited till six  
Then time to grieve.

**1.**

*It's been a hard year, and of course he won't know  
That demands on my time have made me feel quite low  
It's the loneliness really, the feeling that I  
Should know how, should be good, shouldn't have to ask why.  
I am smiling at him and I'm building rapport  
Open question, I'll listen – I can't do much more  
"How's it been? The past few months? What's good and what's not?  
"How are things for you? Why, where, when, who and what?"  
(The six honest serving men – working a treat  
He's looking at me now – perhaps more upbeat?  
And preparing to share with me how things have been  
Open questions are marvellous – help you to glean  
Information and get things kicked off, so they say  
I wish I had worn something cooler today).*

**2.**

So how's it been?  
Well it's been shit  
I won't say that  
I don't want it  
To last too long  
Some platitudes  
Say nothing wrong  
No attitude  
She's very flushed  
I'm very tired  
She's trying hard  
To be admired.  
*"It's been okay  
A few hiccups*

*But we've coped well  
With the mix-ups  
And things have worked  
At least I guess  
They have because  
There's no real mess".*

At least not here  
In this white box  
Where thin, straight arrows  
Join the dots  
And boxes filled  
With acronyms  
And reports  
Made of antonyms  
And meetings  
Full of synonyms  
Keep it objective  
Keep things clear  
Anaesthetise me  
From the fear  
Of death and dying  
And the stress  
Of loneliness  
There's no real mess.

**1.**

*He's opening up, making things flow quite well  
And he's mentioned the mix-ups so no need to dwell  
On the problems for too long, I'm pleased about that  
That's the difficult part for me, having to chat  
About weaknesses, failings, development needs  
I always feel nervous in case this precedes  
Some discussions about my own management style  
And some truths which will hurt, that I'll take with a smile  
But remind me of things said about me before  
When I left home for work - "Need to see you some more-  
Need to see you and talk with you – put down your phone -  
You sit in your office, you're working alone,  
What's the work for exactly when we are left here  
With no sense of a future – your input is rare".*

*I'm feeling so fragile – a lump in my throat  
I'm worried that he will use some anecdote  
To uncover a failure, weakness on my part  
I've tried so hard lately – don't want him to start  
Picking holes, raising issues, exposing my flaws  
They're not my fault, actually. I'm not the cause.  
He's annoying me, judging me, taking the lead  
None of this is my fault – it's not what I need.*

2.

Her face is red  
Her eyes look wet  
Don't understand  
Now I regret  
The mention of  
The mix-ups when  
I said that things  
Were fine and then  
I used the word  
'Mess' to describe  
The state of things  
Not as a jibe.  
I've upset her  
She's at a loss  
I've said something  
To make her cross  
I'll rescue things  
I'll try my best....

1.

*I need to get  
Things off my chest  
He asks too much  
As they all do  
I try so hard  
I'm human too.  
I'm sitting here  
He's sitting there  
He's so relaxed  
Hasn't a care  
It's not my fault  
I just can't find  
The time for them  
I'm so behind  
With work and mail  
And all the stuff  
I have to do  
I've had enough.*

2.

I'm not sure what is happening here in this room  
Was it something I said? Did I say things too soon?  
She's uneasy, distracted, unsettled, am I  
Such a difficult subject? I just don't know why  
We are putting ourselves through this painful process  
When I see in her face that she cares even less  
Than I do, and it troubles her, haunts her to be  
My manager, desperately managing me.

Doing all of the things the books say that she should  
Saying the things that she really hoped would  
Bring us closer, as colleagues, more empathy, then  
I would be more engaged, more productive, again.  
Doesn't work that way, does it? No meeting of minds,  
No heart in it, soul in it, two of a kinds.  
You see life is more messy than charts can portray  
And plans are derailed in a moment, a day  
There is life and there's death and there's stuff in between  
She died, I was here, sitting behind my screen  
Doing stuff, moving papers and playing with words  
There is life, there is death and then there's the absurd.

1.

*He doesn't know  
How much I long  
To laugh, to cry  
Do something wrong.  
Let down my guard  
Look in his eyes  
Tell him about  
The bright blues skies  
In Crete. We were  
On holiday  
Long time ago  
There's not a day  
When I don't wish  
For less of this  
And more of that  
To throw away  
My thinking hat  
All six of them  
No strategy  
No vision, mission,  
Place to be  
Except with them  
Away from here  
No judgement, failure,  
Tension, fear*

2.

Our words fall on the floor in this white painted tomb  
On the cord carpet, soaking up crap in this room  
In a day we won't know what we said or agreed  
But she'll write it down, just in case, so we won't need  
To recall it, we can't because we both don't care  
For the record we'll have it, the words from thin air.  
She is anxious, I'm bored, she is not in control  
She's the boss, but she's not, she is playing a role  
I'll agree, I will nod and I'll give her her due

I'll accept words of wisdom, agree with them too  
She's ok – she's just doing a job that they say  
Is the job she must do – they have shown her the way  
It's the 'human relations' school, Y theory stuff  
To relate to a human – why is it so tough?  
In this box, on this carpet, a plasterboard place  
Where feelings are hidden and we wear the face  
That we hung on the hook when we got home last night  
That we put on each morning. The mask is too tight.  
Take it off, take it off – which one of us will be  
The first one, the brave one – Me? Should it be me?

### **1. (To him)**

You seem okay  
I wish I knew  
About your life  
And about you  
Don't want to cross  
Professional lines  
But in your eyes  
I see some signs  
That I would like  
To understand  
Hope you don't mind  
This isn't planned.

### **2. (To her)**

Your kids look cute.  
The picture's nice  
The place you're in  
Like paradise.  
Wish I were there  
Things have been tough  
Since losing her  
It is enough  
To just get up  
And face the day  
I'm sitting here  
Nothing to say

### **1. (to him)**

Sometimes you wish  
I'd go away?  
And as for me  
I miss those days  
I miss the freedom  
Miss the ways



We used to play  
I miss it all  
You missed her death  
I missed them crawl.

**2. (to her)**

And in this box  
We choose to crawl  
We slowly die  
Inside, and all  
Our wounds and cracks  
Are taped and bound  
To stop the light,  
To mute the sounds  
Of tears and laughter  
Joy and pain  
Let in the light  
Let's live again

**1. (to him)**

You do your work  
And I'll do mine  
We'll meet and talk  
Things will be fine  
Tell me the truth  
I'm only me  
I'll write stuff down  
For you to see  
But it's my guess  
That what we say  
We will remember  
Anyway.

**2. (to her)**

We will remember  
Anyway  
You seem alright.  
You seem okay.  
I will remember this, today.

**1.(to him)**

You seem alright  
You seem okay  
Thank you.  
I think we found a way.  
I will remember this, today.

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## Mathematician meets Fashion designer:

### The future of fashion will be multidisciplinary innovation!

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**Abstract.** The fashion system recycles the same ideas over and over again, with a very low rate of innovation. We found each other at the cutting edge of fashion innovation and claim that much, much more innovation is possible. We found it is time to analyse our collaborative work and put it in the global context of fashion innovation. The projects are summarised in the paper.

In each project we contribute new concepts from fashion, from technology and from mathematics.

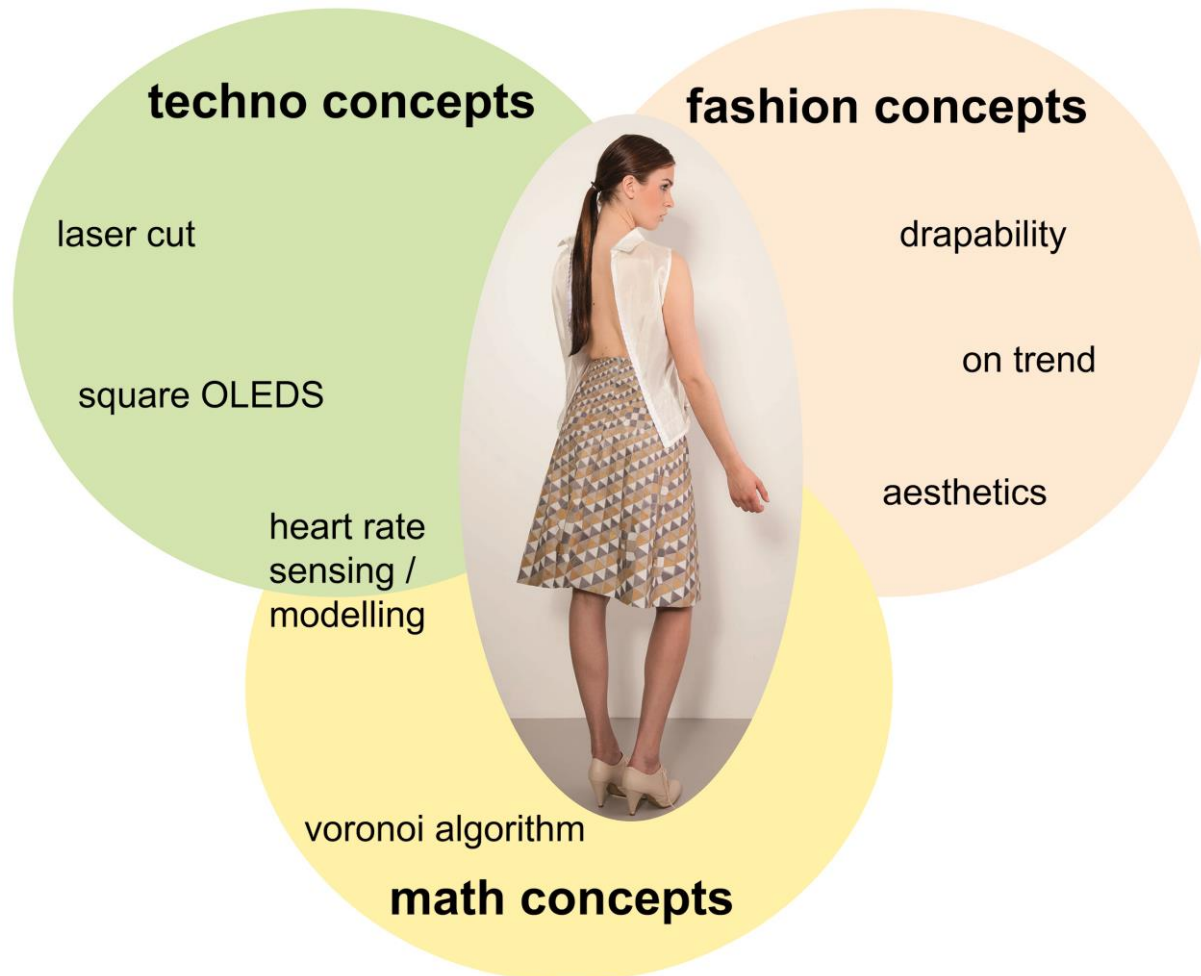


Fig. 1: 2012: First collaborative project of Loe and Marina: Drapely- O-Lightment (Leonardo 2015)

**Mathematics and fashion.** It is essential that we come from complementary disciplines: math, fashion. Ligenza / De Comité is a similar combination. As an example of a cooperation leading to beautiful results, we mention the work of hat designer Gabriela Ligenza (Ligenza 2015) who cooperates with mathematician De Comité (De Comité 2014). The 3D printed hats, based on the mathematical shape called cardioid, are futuristic and express simplicity and complexity at the same time.

**New pattern aesthetics.** For mathematicians these are exciting times. As Francesco De Comité (De Comité, 2014) writes “innovative programmable machines (laser cutters, 3D printers) allow the dreams of mathematicians to become real: imagine objects, build their representation, manipulate them.” Regarding the question of beauty, Francesco De Comité (De Comité, 2014) writes: “It is often difficult to define what beauty or aesthetics is. In the light of this example (the cardioidal variations), an answer might be that the underlying simplicity of the definition, together with the complexity of the generated

universe of shapes, could be an important part of what makes artistic appeal. Occam's razor principle and Kolmogorov complexity might be called to the rescue." This is also what we tried in the pied-de-poule (PDP) and fractal warp knit projects. See here our examples of new pattern aesthetics by the use of mathematical principles, computer processing and digital fabrication tools.



Fig. 2: Fractal PDP (Feijs 2013), Fig. 3: Fractal Warp Knit (Feijs 2014), Fig. 4: Fractal Line PDP (Feijs 2015)

**Promising shape-changing interfaces.** The topic of shape-changing interfaces is promising (Coelho, Zigelbaum, 2011), but there is a gap between what current technology can offer and what it takes to make it practical, comfortable and affordable. Examples of **shape changing garments** and the use of and feedback loops are represented in figure 5-13.



Fig. 5: Toer de force (Toeters 2014), Fig. 6: Actuating a outfit: workshop @ ABWxD, Providence USA



Fig. 7-12: 4 results out of the student module Actuating movement in wearables @TU/e (Toeters 2014), Fig. 13: Dynamic Knits exhibition setting during DDW15 in collaboration with JSSJS Product Design (by-wire.net 2015)

The topic of dynamics in garments is also addressed in the work of Mohamad Baharom (Baharom 2016) show in figure 16: a robotic zipper. The European project GHOST (Kwak et al. 2014) studies an area called “soft robotics”, see for example <http://softroboticstoolkit.com/>.

In dynamic fashion, our hero is Hussein Chalayan. He recently gave new form to the notion of transformation (again) in his SS16 Paris Fashion Week Pasatiempo collection with garments dissolving in water and then revealing a layer of 3D printed garments underneath. Chalayan often collaborates with Moritz Waldemeyer, who pushes the limits of technology.

As we have different backgrounds (fashion & mathematics) we have common ground too. Which is the love for technology. We work in the Eindhoven University of Technology with people like Tomico, Wensveen, Nachtigall, Van Dongen et al. We like hands-on prototyping work and networked organisation approach as the by-wire.net company does. The cooperation is rewarding in itself because of the inspiration and the opening-up of possibilities. The results are distributed via teaching, small design or fashion venues for example (Coleman 2012, Ritsumei 2013, De Kantfabriek 2014, by-wire.net 2015), math/art conferences (Feijs and Toeters 2013, Feijs, Toeters, Hu and Liu 2014, Toeters and Feijs 2014, Feijs and Toeters Bridges 2015, Feijs and Toeters 2016, and an art/techno journal (Feijs and Toeters Leonardo 2015).

**Combining the two principles.** In our latest example we are heading towards combining new pattern aesthetics and shape changing interfaces or dynamics in garments.

The Pied de Pulse project (figure 15) has two aims. The first is to study and implement a fractal-like structure of circles inspired by Apollonian circles, combined with a pied de poule (houndstooth). The second aim is to push the integration of electric actuators in garments, using the power of algorithmic design and digital manufacturing. Digital embroidery-machine patterns in Tajima file format are generated by an extension of Jun Hu's turtle graphics library Oogway. Flat coils of copper with magnets work as vibration actuators in the garment like the well-known rotary vibration motors, but better integrated in the garment and matching fashion production methods. (Bridges 2016)

**Different time-to-market perspectives.** Combining principles like fractals, Apollonian circles and electronica actuation makes the project a more interesting research topic, but introduces a new complexities as well. Different results have the potential of being practical, but on different timelines; the pied de poules (figure 1-4) are feasible now. During the symposium we can show some examples in an exhibition setting. The dynamic projects (figure 5-13) might enter the market perhaps in ten years and aren't too easy to reproduce. During the symposium we can show promising concept videos.





Fig. 14: Pied de Pulse: Packing Embroidered Circles and Coil Actuators in Pied de Poule (Feijs 2016)

**Education.** We think that the teaching of new possibilities to design students is a good investment for a better and more creative system later. Work of our students Leonie and Mohamad show this.



Fig. 15: Leonie Tenthof van Noorden (Tenthof van Noorden 2013)



Fig. 16: a robotic zipper developed by Mohamad Baharom (Baharom 2016)

Our results did not reach “the fashion system” yet), which is no surprise in view of the nature of the fashion system. Fashion is all about making desirable predictions. Timing, context and cultural heritage are key topics to find the right tone of voice, tone of shapes, tone of colours, tone of materials, tone of dynamics and tone of prints. By doing all these collaborative projects we developed a toolbox via which we can react surprisingly quick on special requests by the use of mathematical principles and come close to the desirable tones. Our students extrapolate these skills further.

**Why tech fashion and mathematics is the perfect match.** An established (fashion) brand identity as starting point of a design process can be developed in a new aesthetics when we start playing with Voronoi diagrams, fractals, wallpaper theory and another mathematical tools. Math has a long history. Combining these two principles highly value cultural heritage issues. This is important for the social acceptance of ‘newness’. As wearable technology and shape changing garments are still very unfamiliar for the big audience but highly relevant, we need to play with established methodology to let innovative garments find the way to the market. Via this paper, educational activities and all the collaborative design projects we hope to contribute to this delicate process of innovating the fashion system towards a better and more creative one.

**About the authors:**

**Loe Feijs** has a M.Sc. in electrical engineering and a Ph.D. in computer science. In the 1980s he worked on video compression and telephony systems. He joined Philips Research to develop formal methods for software development. In 1994 he became part-time professor of Mathematics and Computer Science, in 1998 scientific director of the Eindhoven Embedded Systems Institute, and in 2000 vice dean of the new department of Industrial Design at TU/e, Eindhoven. At present he is professor for Industrial Design of Embedded Systems. Feijs is the author of three books on formal methods and of over 100 scientific papers.

**Marina Toeters** is educated as a fashion designer and holds a Master of Arts. She operates on the cutting edge of technology and fashion design. Through her business by-wire.net she stimulates hands-on collaboration between the fashion industry and technicians for a relevant fashion system and supportive garments for everyday use. She advises, amongst others, Philips Research and the European Space Agency on product development. As a teacher, coach and researcher, she works for the fashion department in the Utrecht school of Arts, textiles in Saxion University for applied science and the Eindhoven University of Technology.



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## Exploring the Leadership Mind-set through the Visual Arts

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### Introduction

Over the last decade many scholars have been stressing that the practice of managing and leading organisations in the 21st century world, where conventions, assumptions and ideologies are constantly changing, needs new approaches to leadership development (Gaddens, 1991, 2003: Hartman, 1998, Adler, 2006, Kelly, 2006)<sup>1</sup>.

In complex sometimes chaotic environments traditional forms of leadership and management development do not offer the tools and mind-set to cope. In fact they can actually be obstacles, as they do not cultivate holistic, socially responsible views of the world. The challenge is to re-imagine the complex realities we face and re-envision how to address them (Woodward and Funk, 2010)<sup>2</sup>.

Karl Weick (1988)<sup>3</sup> wrote: "Consider the tools of logic and rationality. Those tools presume that the world is stable, knowable and predictable. To set aside these tools is not to give up on finding a workable way to keep moving. It is only to give up one means of direction finding that is ill-suited to the unstable, the unknowable, and the unpredictable. To drop the tools of rationality is to gain access to lightness in the form of intention, feelings, stories, improvisation, experience, imagination, active listening, and awareness in the moment, novel words and empathy. All of these nonlogical activities enable people to solve problems and enact their potential."

Edgar Schein (2005) advises consultants to trust their own "artistic impulses" to decide what kind of interventions to make in a human system, for there are always more data than one can absorb, there will be always surprises, and there will never be enough predictability to determine a "correct" course of action.

The relation between the arts and leadership has been referred to in various ways, for example as "The Art of Leadership" (Adler, 2006),<sup>4</sup> "Artful Leadership" (Mary Tschirhart 1997<sup>5</sup>, Michael Jones, 2006,<sup>6</sup>), and "Leading aesthetically in uncertain times" (Bathurst, R., Jackson, B. and Statler, M., 2010)<sup>7</sup>.

### Leadership defined

We may consider the notion of "artful leadership", as defined and developed since the middle of the 1990s, as one of the latest results of searching and analysing the phenomena of the leadership mind-set and leadership styles.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ian Sutherland, Arnold Walravens. 2011. Editorial on Arts and Leadership. *Artful Leadership, Reflexion of Executive MBA students, IEDC, Bled*, pp. 3-8; and Purg, Danica, and Arnold Walravens. 2015. "Arts and Leadership: Vision and Practice at the IEDC-Bled School of Management". *Journal of Leadership Studies*. 9 (1): 42-47.

<sup>2</sup> Woodward, J., and Colin Funk. 2010. "Developing the artist-leader". *Leadership*. 6 (3): 295-309.

<sup>3</sup> Weick, Karl E. 1988. Enacted Sense-making in Crisis Situations. *Journal of Manager Studies* 25 (4): 305-317.

<sup>4</sup> Adler, Nancy J. 2006. *The Arts & Leadership: Now That We Can Do Anything, What Will We Do?* Academy of Management Learning & Education Vol. 5, No. 4 (2006) pp. 486-499. Academy of Management

<sup>5</sup> Tschirhart, Mary. 1996. *Artful leadership: managing stakeholder problems in nonprofit arts organizations*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, Michael. 2006. *Artful leadership: awakening the commons of the imagination*. Orillia, Ont: Pianoscaples.

<sup>7</sup> Bathurst, Ralph, Brad Jackson, and Matt Statler. 2010. "Leading aesthetically in uncertain times". *Leadership*. 6 (3): 311-330.

Figure 1: Leadership defined (1930s – present)

DEFINING LEADERSHIP		
1930s	Lewin	Autocratic leadership Democratic leadership Laissez-faire leadership
1964	Blake-Mouton (Managerial grid)	People-oriented leadership Task-oriented leadership
1969	Henry Blanchard	Situational leadership
1971	House (Path-goal theory)	Leadership related to capability of people
1978	James McGregor Burns	Transformational leadership
1985	Bernard M. Bass	Transactional leadership Transformational leadership
2002	Goldman, Boyatzis McKee	Six emotional leadership styles: Visionary leadership Coaching Affiliative leadership Democratic leadership Pace-setting Commanding
2007	Flamholtz, Randle	Leadership style matrix: Four quadrants identifying two possible leadership styles, effective for a given situation: from autocratic / benevolent autocratic to consensus / laissez-faire

There are various orientations to observe when analysing the development of leadership theories, e.g.

1. From political to organisational
2. From structural and general to segmental
3. From task to people
4. From functional to emotional
5. From overall to situational

The notion of “artful leadership” is linked to the various above-mentioned characteristics. However, it contains many new elements. In his book “Artful leadership: Awakening the commons of the imagination” Michael Jones states that “leaders will need to develop a capacity for experiencing and understanding a new and more subtle intelligence, a way of knowing that is not a separate mental function, but rather the source of an imaginative response to our world. As a kind of sense organ, this intelligence reaches out and makes tentative contact with wholeness, that is, things of an order larger than we can see directly, making visible, what is hidden - so as to begin to draw into awareness, which cannot yet be heard or seen.”

“Artful leadership” goes beyond pragmatic, short-term and short-sighted approaches and solutions. This makes it possible to search for “the most beautiful” ways to respond to challenges. “Beautiful” is related to notions such as sustainable, transparent, well-communicated to stakeholders and socially responsible. It is about leadership with authority, i.e. recognized and willingly accepted by followers and stakeholders.

In defining “beautiful” leadership, we also include a large number of characteristics from “transformational leadership”. From a questionnaire regarding this leadership style, we have selected the following ten elements:<sup>8 9</sup>

- Integrity
- Emotional Intelligence
- Motivating people through shared vision on the future
- Self-awareness
- Empathy
- Being humble
- Communicating well
- Assuming personal accountability for one’s decisions
- Setting clear goals
- Having conflict-resolution skills

It is remarkable that if we ask executives to rate themselves as leaders according to these elements with scores ranging from 5 (fully agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), the lowest scores are always between 3 (doubt) and 4 (agree). And although the scores vary between 3-4 and 4-5 all still believe themselves to be “transformational” leaders. Our hypothesis is that most people, due to lack of self-knowledge or a self-image they believe is socially desirable, will not admit that they are not transformational leaders. The same is true of being a democratic leader. It seems that nobody wants to be seen as autocratic or non-transformational. Our conclusion is therefore that we must look deeper inside leaders to get answers about their personal leadership mind-sets.

### **Leadership and the art styles metaphor**

Looking for a more indirect way to let leaders discover and be open about their leadership mind-set, we decided upon a metaphorical approach which explores the use of art style periods. In the arts a process of change is continually taking place, inspired and influenced by the creativity of artists and the “Zeitgeist”. Art can thus be considered as representing the cultural history of mankind, depicting superficial, structural and disruptive changes in society. Our observation is that leaders, too, have these functions in history. Although clear lines of change, also defined as modernization, are visible in leadership concepts and styles just as they are in art styles, particular art styles or their elements survive as artefacts or as sources of inspiration for new style periods.

Leadership mind-sets are similarly built over time, containing elements of the past while continually adopting newer elements. As in the arts, despite the historical and conceptual challenges various leadership mind-sets are to be found amongst executives today. As a metaphorical indicator of possible leadership styles, Fig. 2 lists ten important art style periods and assigns a small number of relevant characteristics to each.

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<sup>8</sup> Burns, James MacGregor. 1978. *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

<sup>9</sup> Bass, Bernard M. 1998. *Transformational leadership: industrial, military, and educational impact*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Figure 2: Art style periods and characteristics (five examples)<sup>10</sup>

<b>GOTHIC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A new vision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Different</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Jubilant</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Technically innovative</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Connecting the worldly and the heavenly (the body and the mind)</li> </ul>	<b>ROMANTICISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Value of individual experience</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exploring values of intuition and instinct</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coping with the hostile environment is heroic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Against conservatism, moderation and insincerity</li> </ul>	<b>REALISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep it simple, just as it is</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Show the real world, no idyllic picture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stick to the rules</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Try to find a balanced, stable structure</li> </ul>
<b>IMPRESSIONISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conscious of continuous change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The aim is to catch the characteristic (relevant) moment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time becomes an important aspect</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Old techniques are no longer adequate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Caring less for detail - the general effect of the whole is important</li> </ul>	<b>EXPRESSIONISM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Expression of feelings (emotions) is the most relevant thing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reality has many faces, and many are dark, negative ones; accept them as real, so that you can deal with them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The insistence on harmony comes from a refusal to see reality, to be honest with yourself.</li> </ul>	

<sup>10</sup> The style periods and their characteristics in Fig. 2 are based on recognised works of art history such as “The Story of Art” by E.H. Gombrich, Phaidon Press, 1995; “Art through the Ages” by Helen Gardner, Wadsworth Publishing 2004; and “The Story of Painting” by Wendy Beckett, Non Basic Stock Line, 2004.

## **Visualisation of art periods and styles**

We designed an executive program along the above lines which has been conducted successfully since 2011. Instead of immediately asking executives in class which characteristics they believe to be elements of their leadership mind-sets, to reach a more concentrated and deeper level of reflection we first describe the art periods and styles using examples of architecture, painting, and sculpture. Participants who know little about art history are introduced to how the artistic concepts of the given periods arose, and how artistic, technical, socio-political, and economic developments influenced each other. They learn something about gradual and disruptive change, and about changes in aesthetic values. We also include the music of the various periods, so that participants not only see but also hear characteristic changes such as growing complexity.

## **Describing oneself and others according to an art style**

As an exercise, we project images of about 25 well-known world leaders onto the screen and ask participants to describe a selected world leader according to one of the art styles presented. This is a personal activity, followed by discussion in small groups. Finally, the outcomes are presented and discussed on in a plenary session. Participants explain the reasons for their choices. This helps them to answer the next question: "If you could paint/sculpt yourself, in which style would you do it?" We know that this is a not an easy question. The leaders in the class are not used to thinking structurally about their leadership mind-sets. In the questionnaire about "transformational" leadership they can answer in a pre-structured, multiple-choice way. Now they have to consider every item in itself. Is a style "more or less me", "me", or "not me"? One can find beauty or a positive element in every style presented, , but their characteristics comprise more subtle elements such as change, action, initiative, openness, originality, and innovation.

In terms of personal development the outcome of the exercise has been surprising. Instead of giving vague, unsure and complex answers to the direct question "what is your leadership mind-set or style?", participants stand up and describe themselves clearly and easily with the help of the art styles offered . The level of openness is recognized and appreciated by the group and every presentation receives applause.

In their first presentations participants often see more than one style in themselves. We believe that this corresponds to reality. Every participant receives immediate feedback from the moderator and from colleagues. This feedback is also based on the exercise following, in which participants try to describe their colleagues according to an art style. At the end of every personal presentation participants are asked: "If you had to choose only one style, which one would you choose? And what would be your second choice?" It is surprising that in about half of cases colleagues actually select a person's second choice to describe him or her. This indicates a difference between how a person would like to be seen and how he/she is seen by others. The conclusion here is that there is still work to be done to bridge this gap of perception.

The "Visual Arts and Leadership" program has been conducted since 2011 for a number of groups, which differ in terms of level of responsibility, age (generation), educational environment, industry and nationality. The program process has been interesting and rather similar across all of these different settings. Initial surprise at this approach to leadership, and a readiness to participate, are comparably high everywhere. Outcomes indicate an interesting differentiation of leadership mind-sets according to generation and international environment.

## **Indications of differences in leadership mind-set**

In Figure 3 we present the first choices of art style by participants in ten participating groups of business leaders.

Figure 3: the first choice of an art style in ten different groups

<b>Art Style</b> <b>Groups</b>	Romanesque	Gothic	Renaissance	Mannerism	Baroque	Romanticism	Realism	Impressionism	Expressionism	Abstract	Total Respondents
EMBA class 2011-2012	0	5	0	0	0	11	21	12	6	4	59
EMBA class 2013-2014	0	2	2	0	0	6	12	5	0	4	31
EMBA class 2015-2016	0	7	2	0	0	9	10	3	0	0	31
YMP 2013	0	3	0	0	3	5	7	7	2	2	29
YMP 2014	0	2	3	0	2	10	9	11	1	2	40
South African EMBA students 2013	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	9	0	1	16
South African EMBA students 2016	0	6	0	0	0	2	3	5	2	1	19
Univ. senior students + staff Colombia 2014	0	12	0	0	0	2	10	9	1	4	38
Managers Club Ptuj 2015	0	2	0	0	0	1	8	12	1	2	26
Slovene Bank 2014, top management	0	11	1	0	0	4	28	15	4	2	65



In the first analysis of the results some elements are noticeable, and perhaps even remarkable:

- In the EMBA classes 2011-12 and 2013-14 “Realism” was the most common choice by far. Many said “basically we are romantic”, but the situation in a time of crisis makes us “realists”. These classes were mainly composed of European executives.
- The EMBA class 2015-16, also comprising mainly European executives, show a more post-crisis mind-set, where “Romanticism” is back. If we analyse a “change” or “non-change” mind-set we also see a slight change compared with the years before (see Figure 5).
- Younger managers in the Young Managers Program (YMP) 2013 and 2014 appear to be less infected by a crisis mind-set. In both years they showed a substantially less “realistic” mind-set and did not stop being “romantic”. Many consider themselves “impressionists”, which as we explain later stands for “gradual change oriented” leadership.
- It is striking that the South African EMBA students from 2013 are not influenced by any crisis and, even in their difficult environment, see chances for change (catching the moment). In the 2013 class “gradual change” was uppermost, whereas the 2016 class moved to “Gothic”, which stands for “disruptive change”. It seems that one becomes more conscious of the necessity for drastic change.
- A leadership mind-set oriented towards disruptive change is very clear among EMBA students from Colombia.
- A majority from the Managers Club Ptuj, Slovenia, want to see change happening. They are managers in an environment that is beginning to elevate itself after a history of hardship and poverty.
- The Slovene Bank, recovering from “post-Yugoslavia” difficulties and simultaneously confronted with the challenges of the crisis and privatisation, shows a clear split between those who want to lead for change, often disrupted change, and others who have the mind-set “stick to the rules” and opt for “a balanced structure”.

The differences between “a mind-set orientation towards change” and “a mind-set orientation towards no change” are shown in section 8, page 12.

### Art periods and styles and the leadership mind-set

To analyse and provide feedback on the art periods and styles chosen we developed a tool which describes the corresponding leadership mind-set: see Figure 4.

The description of periods in Figure 4 are also offered as an exercise in every session.

Figure 4

ART PERIODS AND STYLES	LEADERSHIP MIND-SET
Romanesque	“Unwavering beacon”
Gothic	“For disruptive change”
Renaissance	“Back to a more beautiful past”
Baroque	“The presentation is essential”
Mannerism	“Based on a success formula”
Romanticism	“I have a dream”
Realism	“Wait and see”
Impressionism	“For gradual change”
Expressionism	“Led by emotions”
Abstract	“Cross-cultural, globally oriented”

## An example analysis of outcomes: change and no-change (or back-to-the-past) mind-sets

This analysis of outcomes draws on section 6.

Figure 5: Change orientation in leadership

Groups	A. / (Gothic + Impressionism)	B. (Realism + Renaissance)
EMBA class 2011-2012	17 (5+12)	21 (21+0)
EMBA class 2013-2014	7 (2+5)	14 (12+2)
EMBA class 2015-2016	10 (7+3)	12 (10+2)
YMP 2013	10 (3+7)	7 (7+0)
YMP 2014	13 (2+11)	12 (9+3)
South African EMBA students 2013	10 (1+9)	4 (4+0)
South African EMBA students 2016	11 (6+5)	3 (3+0)
Univ. senior students + staff Colombia 2014	21 (12+9)	10 (10+0)
Managers Club Ptuj 2015	14 (2+12)	8 (8+0)
Slovene Bank 2014, top management	26 (11+15)	29 (28+1)

A = change

B = no change (or back-to-the-past)

## Conclusions

Leadership has always been a field of study. New descriptive elements have been continuously added to the leadership concept: democratic vs. autocratic; people vs. task situational, visionary, transformational, etc.

In a search for leadership that can cope with the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, further new aspects are NOW being applied: inspirational, beautiful and artful. The hypothesis is that new leadership can be defined by the same basic characteristics as art: inspiration, imagination, intuition, authenticity, and skills. We have tried to translate this view of leadership into a program for executive development. Seeking content and a tool which enables executives to reflect more deeply on their leadership mind-sets and styles, we presented art periods and styles and described their main characteristics. Our experience was that this “metaphorical” approach offered participants the possibility to consider their leadership styles and gave them a way to talk freely and openly on the subject. When analysing personal outcomes we saw indications of some striking differences in leadership mind-set between generations and geographical (socio-economic) environments. Although our first aim was to explore new ways of leadership development, further research will discover whether the methodology developed can also help us to understand the relationship between leadership mind-set and the characteristics of the relevant environment.

## Beyond an island experience towards an archipelago of collaborative learning.

Daniel Doherty

**Abstract** – this paper constitutes an autoethnographic account of one's delegate's inner process post participation in the September 2016 Art of Management and Organisation Conference (AoMO) in Bled, Slovenia. This account troubles issues concerning the persistence of learning and social connection post the 'island' experience of a conference itself. It charts the 'call and response' patterns of written exchange between the autoethnographer and his respondents, relating the effects of this reflexive 'call and response' on both parties sense of self and sense of professional direction. The paper suggests that through this written exchange the conference experience ceases to be a nostalgia infused island and instead becomes a generative archipelago that clusters learning and propulsive action towards itself.

### Introduction

Academic conferences represent a moment in time, the highlights of which are usually feted then consigned to memory through award distributing, expressions of appreciations, a clamorous taking of photos before air-kissed farewells, book-ended by the publication of the proceedings. With the best of intentions, the commitments made by delegates to stay in touch, to work collaboratively with each other across disciplines and institutions, and to work differently in their field tend to display a dishearteningly short half-life. Beyond the wistful knowledge that we delegates may all very well meet next year to do it all over again – when we will make the same vain promises to keep in touch – we know deep inside that contact with each other will be spasmodic and that potential departures from current practice will be suffocated by the pressures of the day-to-day..

For many, academic management conferences constitute a quite perfunctory experience, a transactional arrangement presaged by low expectation. The conference in memory remains an island experience, where the main aim is to give 'my' paper an airing in a professional setting, and to meet some folk that might help progress your next paper. It may also serve at some level to assess the competition. With such low expectations, it is little wonder that the half-life of conference learning is subject to intense decline. This dynamic is well known and often enough complained about: yet the question of what factors might cause learning persistence alongside of enduring collaboration as opposed to those factors driving derogation is rarely explored. The AoMO series of conferences seek to redress this entropic tendency through engaging affect through the aesthetic, in addition to working at the cognitive level. Even then, AoMO is subject to the dynamics of derogation. t

This paper seeks to address the tensions between decay and persistence through autoethnographic exploration of one delegate's post-conference experiences. It tracks in particular the 'call and response' with other delegates that is evoked through the sharing of a post conference blog. The blog is also shared more widely with other colleagues who did not participate in the conference but who are sympathetic to the themes in play. This paper presents verbatim transcripts of the two major blogs thus far written; interspersed with some detail on delegate feedback on my 'voice' offered at the conference itself and in response to the blog. In addition this paper include personal reflections from respondents relating to the impact of the blog on their experience of the issues expressed; and of the extent to which the blog propels them towards singular and collaborative action.

### BLOG 1, three days on from conference:

#### 'Busking my way towards Bled'

As i basked in a sense of profound plentitude following the closure of the Art of Management Conference at Bled, Slovenia, I ask myself why it was that this particular conference hit the spot so well for me, this

time around, when often academic conferences leave me flat and frustrated, unfulfilled? The answer comes back that this sense of completion was much to do with what had come before, and then the way in which the conference process pulled together a number of loose and somewhat disconnected strands in my life. Leading up to the conference, summer 2016 contained a powerful mix of music festivals and voice / singing workshops of all kinds, interlaced with an urge to engage in reflective writing into my past and possible futures, an urge that pressed deeper the longer summer went on. This writing included rumination on the music that shaped my 1980s, a specific provocation initiated by Stephen Linstead on Facebook, which propelled this inquiry into the role of music in my life well beyond that particular decade.

Alongside of that introspection was my pushing to get tangible and semi-respectable publications out of a backlog of writings that have been hanging around on my guilt- list for an increasingly long and frustrating time, as I continued to struggle with what various reviewers have made of them. What occurred in this re-writing process though was far from simply editing my backlog to a state somewhere fit for consumption. Instead I found myself increasingly writing reflective 'accounts of practice' based on close personal experiences, two such offerings proving to be well received by editors and reviewers of 'practice' journals.

Meanwhile my more controversial autoethnographic pieces continued to receive the usual knock-backs from the editors of posh journals, which was hardly a surprise. In the end i sent off these by now archaic pieces to zero star journals that seemed happy enough to Hoover them up, placing them somewhere out there in the ether, while offering me closure and an opportunity to move onto fresh writing. All of this helped me to clarify what it is that i like to write and how i like to write it, personally and expressively, at a time in life when i am not under the guillotine of 'publish or perish,' but while I am still feeling strong need to make sense of the the world within me and around me in written form. This impulse to word my world includes my need to explore my whole self all, not simply those pieces that might be of academic or professional interest to others.

In the course of all of this I have found myself writing about my various musical and voice workshop experiences, including 'men singing' events, then sharing these reflections with fellow participants in a different form of accounts of practice, in a different setting. I also found myself writing into and revisiting of a number of academic and professional 'ouch' moments that were presenting themselves, which were asking to be looked at and dealt with. This need for backward sense making was accompanied by the usual 'age and stage' questions that continually present themselves in the seventieth decade, including asking the perennial question of how long one might persist in teaching and researching management in a business school setting. Some days the answer feels like 'forever'; while just the wrong thoughtless email at a time when the body protests a little too much is enough to make me want to pack up working in that context immediately.

All of this then was the existential soup swirling around in my life as i approached the AoMO conference in Bled. It occurs to me now that if i had assembled these various elements in a Venn diagram. then the answer right at the centre of that diagram might well have been the Art of Management Conference, and all that it brought with it. The beginning of the conference was perfect, as i thought it might be, featuring as it did Frankie Armstrong, long time hero of mine leading an Archetypes voice workshop that was unparalleled in its range and power. Those of we twelve participants fortunate enough to experience this event severally said that 'this workshop alone would have made the conference fee worthwhile'; 'there could have been no better start to a conference' to 'all conferences should begin with a voice workshop like this one.' The voice workshop felt immediately familiar, but the exploration of leadership archetypes through voice and movement was new and highly enlightening. i learned and corporeally intuited a great deal, including a painful review of some of my more recent lucifer - type falls from grace, and the pain of speaking truth to power. Once this fundamentally challenging and embracing workshop finished I dropped into a plenary inquiry into how this conference might be made

different from other 'academic conferences'. The need for this question made little sense to me. not after the power of the archetypes workshop provided the answer.

The Frankie Armstrong workshop caused those of us who were there to bond powerfully around that intimate embodied experience. We were there for each other throughout the conference. we had the inside track. We found ourselves following each other into similar workshop streams, including the 'storytelling' stream, where much licence was afforded to express ourselves in dialogue, in song and in movement. In between the cracks of these various presentations and events, close conversations were held in poetic spaces and on crammed bus trips between gala dinners and musical performances, where raw moments and unfinished business in our histories and ensuing personal dilemmas could be given an airing.

Beyond this catharsis and personal repair flowing from sharing with fellow travellers who have been there or somewhere like it, there was the opportunity to share one's own arts based learning interventions, and to have others appreciate and build upon these. In turn we were intrigued and often inspired by the dazzling artistry of our fellow delegates various creative and courageous approaches. One aspect of the conference process was that each of us had only thirty minutes or so to share our arts based practice applied in a management setting, a challenge that meant that our work and expression needed to be compressed in 'haiku' form. For many of us this meant that we needed to forsake the intellectual scaffolding surrounding our offering and dive straight into experiential immersion. In my case this meant reducing the explanation of my piece on the application of voice work to the training and development of executive coaches into one or two sentences. I found myself saying 'my voice work and my coach training used to occupy distinct universes. Now I am finding that each are informing the other, more strongly by the day, as I grow bolder in my experimentation.' This was new to me, and played at the back of my mind as I launched the group in resplendent song.

Casting my eyes around the room as we moved towards a close, it occurred to me that one similarity between this gathering and music festivals was that while some participants were materially well endowed, through a regular job that may or may not have been connected to the arts; that there were others, in the same way as so many musicians and street performers, living a precarious life sustained only by their commitment to the expression of their art. I never fail to be so admiring of such folk that persist without the aid of a safety net.

## **Blog 2, four weeks after conference:**

### **'Emergent autumnal threads, post Bled.'**

Immediately after the Bled conference I stayed on in the town itself, away from the Business School, welcoming Louise and continuing to breath the mountain air, while allowing the heightened excitements of the conference to settle to a more reflective place. Sitting at the kitchen table, gazing over the snow tipped mountains, I allowed myself to free-write. What emerged from that doodling was the blog I shared with you a few weeks ago, which indicated that a sense of fresh direction was afoot, without knowing exactly what that direction might be. In a tentative plan for 2016 – 17 – which I had drafted pre- Bled - I had sketched 'more of the same', suggesting I follow the pattern of the past two years. However, satisfactory though those experiences have been, the Bled revelations have turned that direction on its head. This blog represents my next level of sense making, four weeks on from Bled, and seeks to gain a sense of what that new direction might be.

On completion of my original Bled blog, I sent it out to the world, primarily to those who had shared the Bled experience, but also to those close to me who might help me make better sense of this fresh direction, or even want to join in with wherever it might be headed. I pressed the send button then

eagerly awaited a response, but for a while nothing came back from this blog sharing. As time wore on I began to feel no little embarrassment at having sent this piece out at all, wondering if Bled was after all a chimera. Perhaps I was alone in the romantic notion that something had profoundly shifted, while others were sensibly back at their day jobs, leaving me adrift, wistfully staring out at the far away mountains, while my day job inbox lay unattended. It was just at the moment when, with a sigh, I was resigning myself to returning to 'more of the same,' that the slender threads of connection that I had tugged in my flush of post Bled inspiration began to yield responses.

The first response came from my near neighbour Jo Treffa, with whom I had shared a sequence of conference moments while sat in the narrative stream. She wrote 'I note that at the point of writing you do not move to start shaping 'it' into 'something', some direction or output. I like this – I like it as a way of being/working/thinking – to hold out the 'what' for as long as possible, to let the 'what' emerge as opposed to forcing a something before it is ready.'

This invocation to hang with the uncertainty proved relieving, and I immediately felt less awkward at having put out such an invitation. It was good to be reminded by Jo of the emergent properties at play, and to know that I was not alone in experiencing this incubation period, this birthing, with all of its attendant tensions, excitements, and apprehensions. Following Jo's encouragement to hang in there, I was then to receive a highly encouraging email from Frankie Armstrong, as well as from several others from within my 'critical coaching research' (CCRG) network who practice in the field of 'archetypes.' As these responses tumbled into my inbox, my confidence that there was after all something tangible emerging here for me - and for others - grew apace.

As many ideas jostled for focus, I began to reframe some existing aspects in my life in a new way, bringing them into play together, when in the past these elements had lived somewhat separate existences. I had been wondering if, after ten years of existence, that CCRG that I had spawned had outgrown its academically 'critical' purpose. I admitted to myself that it probably had, and that it could now be refreshed with the focus on the archetypes work. I speculated that in this way it could become more the Creative Coaching Research Group as much as the Critical Research group.

I speculated that my university teaching work could be pointed more and more towards reflective practice, and towards deeper understanding of where untapped capacities for leadership might reside within the individual students. The prospect of my travelling to London each week for the next six months to teach suddenly feeling less irksome when I received an enthusiastic invitation to rejoin a mens' singing group in London on Tuesday evenings, as well as to do some flash mobbing and whatever craziness might transpire with them. Meanwhile the singing that I have been doing over the past few weeks has assumed more seriousness, more of a sense of purpose. As it happened circumstances offered me the opportunity to be lead voice in a bass section not once but thrice, across different choirs, an experience that I greatly learned from; while the chance to be MC at a fancy wedding allowed me full scope to feel my voice working in a different, dramatic way. At the same time my ancient Volvo passes its MOT road worthy test, reminding me that there is life in this old dog also. This is my festival-going, singing camping car and it tells me that it is ready to go, one more time, for at least one more year on the road, feeling fully alive.

Plans I have hitherto made to sing with my siblings during this autumn in a number of 'my' choirs takes on new resonance, as my disparate worlds begin to collide, harmoniously. Within the family we talk of the deep alchemical nature of change, over all these decades of living together and apart. It feels as though my constellations are being reconfigured in real time, as my spirit guides meet and nod acquaintance. Continuing messages from the universe pour in, as former students make felicitous contact to say how powerful and enduring our adventures into deep learning have proven to be, whetting my appetite for more of the same this academic year. The phony wars that occur at the beginning of the new academic year are nearly done, as the institutional emails subside and the space

clears for some teaching of the new intakes. My efforts to get my backlog of writing published during the summer prove successful, duly harvesting seven publications, fully acknowledged by the university. These are not typical pieces of academic writing, and their acceptance signifies that it is possible to write with a distinctive personal voice and still get published. The clamouring for academic journal star ratings is over for me, while the writing process is not.

If Bled reminded me that there is an academic tribe out there that embraces my approach to development work, then my return to university in preparation for the new year reinforces my feeling that comradeship among my institutional colleagues is not similarly rooted. One recent singing event brought together ten men that I know from a variety of singing contexts over the past five years. The strong bond that we spontaneously recreated in that moment, around a table where we instinctively huddled together, reminded me that these men are my tribe. 'Men who talk together are friends. Men who sing together are brothers.' One asked how I survive within an institutional setting, given my free-spirited, rebellious nature. I reflected to him that many years back I was described by a coach as playing a 'Gulliver' type role within bureaucracies, forever hog-tied by pettifogging detail. I realize in that moment that my natural leadership may only fully breathe outside of such institutional contexts, though it does not limit me from intervening from an outside positioning.

All in all this has proven to be a miraculous few weeks as the incubation process proceeds ever deeper. The question still remains – 'what is truly being created here, really?'. I cannot sleep at times with all of these synchronicities playing together in a energetic whirl. Each time I shake the kaleidoscope then a new element suggests itself before the pattern settles. In the event the moment to crystallise the gestalt arrives on a long train trip where I take over a empty table and begin to map out what all of this colliding of ideas and impulses might mean, in an attempt to divine where it might be headed. On the train table before me I mapped out the various events that I have already signed up for over the coming year - together with the more recently surfaced events that have just suggested themselves - on a time line. I plot my teaching and CCRG commitments on the same timeline and somewhat miraculously it all falls into place in a grand pattern without significant diary conflicts. As I test the financial reality I discover that it can all be done within a budget based on my current income. Leaning back to looking at this overall picture, I feel a rush of adrenalin. Suddenly this is all feeling very real, this fresh apprenticeship I am creating and investing in.

Alongside of this linear plan I craft a Venn diagram capturing the various elements existing within this emergent direction. Voice work; discovery writing; reflective practice; coaching; leadership development; learning and facilitation; constellations; accounts of practice; performance; psychodrama; narrative work; writing into coaching, coaching into writing; constellation; men's voices, alone and together. As these circular plates developed a capaciousness, one with another, I allowed my eyes to freely focus on the centre of this diagram, inviting into consciousness what might be common across these disparate fields. After a while, the working title that suggested itself was

### ***Discovering / releasing Voice***

and I remain happy with that title, for the time being. It captures the work that I have been doing on myself in recent times through a variety of media and will continue to do so in service of the emergence of my distinctive voice – and alongside of that the facilitation of others discovery of their voice through writing, through song, through drama, through film-making, through whatever is up. It is also about the discovery of collective voice as much as individual voice – what happens when those distinctive voices seek to blend? What happens in the world when that happens?

I would like to think that my leadership is in play here, and that it invites others in good and playful ways. There is no doubt that I will learn much about this type of leading along the way, as well as about the ways in which my voice may be of service.



I am not looking at this stage to create a 'programme'; or a market offering that is aching to be monetized. I am not discounting the possibility of that occurring sometime into the future but at this stage that is not a commercial goal. I am well aware of associates who in the recent past have sought to fast track and then monetize ideas that are need of considerable inquiry – including deep self-inquiry – before they are unleashed on the world. In this sense I see myself as an amateur, and would never want to lose the sense of playfulness and joy that is currently running inside me.

Transitional containers/ incubators for this work at this point could include the CCRG; there is also the possibility of a coaching stream that we run through the university, working together with the performance arts and psychology departments. Then there are of course the singing groups themselves. Not to mention the AoMO community that is well established and networked, with a focal point of the 2018 Brighton AoMO conference. We could also to look to set up regional activities, especially here in Devon. There is a strong feeling of incorporation of the new, alongside of reintegration of the new.

This is a time for materialization, and already the tugging of a variety of slender threads is causing them to growing into strong ropes. It would be really good to hear from you as to what this latest blog might inspire in you ... Please write as freely and as generously as you may. I am so looking forward to discovering where this might be headed. At this stage it is good to be thinking of a plan yet I know that for this next year so much is about me placing myself in situations where I know learning will be abundant, if not tough at times. It is time to put this blog out – it feels along the lines of Paul Simon's description of putting a song out into the world – 'not so much finished as abandoned.'

This is my birthday week and autumn my season – what better time to hasten this birthing? As a friend and supervisor wrote on reading the first blog 'lots of powerful threads to tug at and pull through in your narrative, looks like great fruitfulness and a coming together of various elements that may have been laying dormant under the soil - I know it's autumn and mellow fruitfulness and all of those influences of abundance and harvesting what you have seeded and tended. Powerful, pregnant and lots of possibilities.'

### **An exploration of my distinctive voice.**

Given that what flows for me from the Bled experience is a strong impulse to work with voice, my own and others, then I ask what did I specifically learn from Bled with regards to insights into my voice, that have prompted me to give priority to voice work in my future plans? As I reflect I feel that part of the impulse came from the fact that quite a number of delegates were spontaneously moved to give me unsolicited feedback on how they experienced my voice, both sung and spoken, in personal conversation as well as in group sessions. Alongside of the feedback on my voice were expressions of their experience of my presence in the wider group, and of how that presence was appreciated in the way that it catalyzed the group at certain pivotal moments.

When I look back then I think it was the weight of this feedback that caused me to reflect that I should take the impact of my voice more seriously, make efforts to get to know it better, to rise beyond the embarrassment we can all feel around our voices, while avoiding undue egotism or indulging in the disease of conceit. I think there is little doubt that the liberating climate of AoMO allowed me the freedom to be truly expressive and I was conscious of some experimentation going on, with the full encouragement of others. Aligned with that encouragement, there is no doubt in my mind that the the original Frankie Armstrong prefacing the conference voice workshop did much to liberate my voice right from the beginning of Bled. It really helped to know there were others present who had heard this voice as much as I had heard and respected theirs, and to know that each of us were in touch with our archetypal grunts and keening cries. Among the encouragers and enablers, those who also experienced

Frankie featured most prominently.

Regarding the specifics of the feedback for one man said that at the beginning of our stream he felt I came across to him as way over the top; but that as the weekend progressed he could see how my interventions catalyzed much cumulative shift within the group. He worried at first that I was a clown, pure and simple; he then saw me as a disruptor, perhaps unhelpfully so, but then later came to value me as a constructive subversive. He then knew me as an evoker of expressiveness in others, to be the jester that is allowed to say the things that others might hold back on saying. Another suggested that I was quick to spot falsity, to call it as such, and to promote a critically disruptive view of uncontended issues. I balance to this she saw me as and supporting strongly of those who struggled to express themselves. She concluded that 'I may be one of the elders but I am still an imp, with a strong free-child in play.'

Further feedback talked of me as a free spirit, a live wire, of someone who at his best demonstrated radical aliveness. They talked of my capacity to enable the group, to sing ourselves into vibrant life, and referenced my intuitive sense of the collective song of the group. One person referred to 'my wild, untamed voice' and I liked that. Another said that my voice had a hypnotic quality to it. I blush to write this but then I need to listen to this feedback also, if I am to best use this voice in service of others. What this reminded me was that I am best often when I being playful and creative. My use of humour was mentioned more than once, and it is true that I can be really quick in my response. I do love a spontaneous environment where quickness, where wittiness is allowed to freely flow, where the pattern is allowed to emerge, to everyone's dawning delight. It is liberating for me to recognize that there little need for me to play precisely by the rules, there are more than enough people in this world who will attend to those rules.

Writing into this reminds me of a somewhat parallel experience I had at a week- long singing event in Riga, Latvia, four years ago, a time when I remember feeling fully alive. Two choir members at Riga said I reminded them of a Douglas in their choir and I liked the idea of being Douglas for them, and for others in the group. They explained that Douglas was my Mr Hyde to my more sensible Doctor Daniel. Douglas in that way was to become my dark side my alter ego, to be treated as a living thing and to be openly evoked by the group. I liked this idea as I freely admit to there being many sides to me, the 'multiple selves' which I enjoy inhabiting fully as fully as imagination and sometimes reality allow. After this experience of the liberation of Douglas, I wrote thus in response to the

the question 'who is Douglas really?'

### *Revealing the voice of Douglas*

*Among my multiple selves there co-exist an activist, a fantasist, an ironist, a comic, an original plagiarist, a divine interventionist, a man who flows alongside of a jerk who cannot stop interrupting at times; a confusionist, an illusionist, a clarifier and summariser, a gift from god, a snot nosed brat who sniffles and whines, a chameleon, an adapter, a contrarian, a buffoon, a controversialist, a provocateur, a lover and a fighter, a courageous fool who cannot help but speak truth to power, an experimentalist, a blabbermouth, a philosopher, a wizard and a total disgrace. I am a writer who has been profligate and may have squandered his gift, maybe not; there may still be time for redemption of that writerly impulse. I am a wanderer and searcher, never truly content, always restless, always thoughtful, sometimes wildly reckless, intuitive and impulsive but not always so. The impulse to express can often get the better of me, or the worse depending on circumstance.*

*I am not quite sure of the place in my life for Douglas ? How could I be? For that is part of his charm and his joy. He is an unsettling but necessary presence that co-exists somewhere beneath the surface, sometimes popping up at times when least invited or wanted. He makes the psychodynamic leap when least invited. As a teen I devoured Herman Hess's Steppenwolf. Douglas is my Steppenwolf and I love him with all my heart. I am not sure if it is Daniel or Douglas you are interested in –but both of them write to you.*

### **Responses evoked by my Bled blog 'call' to interested others**

My sharing of my initial blog evoked a variety of responses, in classical 'call and response' mode, as categorized below, including at the contextual level of conferencing; to personal feedback for me on my voice; to others personal insights and sense making invoked by my reflections; towards propulsion towards separate as collaborative action.

#### ***A contextualization response.***

One of the first responses was from the AoMO organisers, who helped me contextualize the ways in which AoMO is different from other conferences, and why it might be that its galvanizing impact on me has been so strong, long after the effect of a traditional conference might have worn thin, or degraded altogether. They wrote on the AoMO FaceBook page thus.

*Thanks for this beautiful reflection, Daniel. One thing that chimed for me was the oddity of the question how can this conference be made different from other academic conferences. It started in difference, to be a place and space FOR difference, where boundaries can be joyously blurred and to which you come because there is nothing else like it. If it doesn't achieve that there's no reason for it to exist. That's why it's every two years - to maintain the creative energy, to resist the production line. We want everyone to look forward to it, to be in a "can't wait for the next one" mood. Of course, we have to be in many ways "normalised" as an academic conference or people won't get the funding to come, but negotiating these boundaries is what artists have done for centuries - including my great (x3) grandfather who exhibited 16 times at the Royal Academy but went bankrupt for a year in 1869-70. We are trying to make things easier for those who need extra support by ploughing any surpluses we receive into supporting both activities and individuals. The real thing that makes the conference different I think are the people who attend. Whilst the technical challenges of running this conference are way, way beyond those of any other conference, I always have the feeling that if everyone turned up to an empty building they'd create a fantastic experience for themselves over three days just working off the buzz of being together. We hope that everyone can find something to provide a little bit of inspiration for whatever else they do.*

***Personal feedback on my voice, my presence.***

It was reassuring to note that the written post-conference feedback on me chimed with the direct face-to-face conference feedback. One piece was written by a delegate who, for the first day or so of the conference referred to me as Frank, a choice that I never chose to correct (and in fact rather enjoyed.) Interestingly this correspondent echoed strongly the Douglas invocation from the previous singing event, cited above. She first wrote to say that 'It was such a pleasure to know the outer Daniel and the inner Frank.... I loved, loved, loved meeting up with you and getting to know you just a bit. You have such a big personality, a booming voice, and a great presence. Who can ignore you for more than two seconds?' This rather took me aback, and I share it because the inner me does not register that I may be making such an impact. This immediately gave me more cause to reflect on this feedback more seriously, and not to automatically discount such feedback, as I often do. In response to this call, I sent her the first blog, and she responded thus

*Dear Frank aka Daniel:*

*I love your writing. You write with utter frankness and abandon; you say what you mean; your words emerge from a deep space of your body past your heart and the throat chakra off course. Perhaps your words emanate from the sofa space behind your knees--and therefore there is such an oooooomph to what you are saying. Your words have power and frankly you have little idea of what this means to others. I sensed in you the utter faithfulness that comes from being committed (frankly enough) to the spontaneous, child-like, awe-filled wonderment that is life itself. You amplified for me the miracle that is life. Your voice spoke of Inca emperors and Scottish clansmen, of the magic of shamans and the enterprise of executives. You have power and in all frankness I found that you had not embraced it as fully as you were able. I do not say this with any sense of authorial superiority; frankly, I am terribly guilty of this as well and I find myself gravitating to people and events that empower me to fully and frankly find my voice. That's why, both of us loved Franky as much as we did and we look forward to spending some time with her before our Brighton Beach experience.*

*Frank aka Daniel, it is for these reasons that I chose to call you Frank--you fit frank as fully as you could and I could not get myself to trudge back to the Biblical era to find out yet again why Daniel did what he did so you could be named for him.*

What pleased me about this was to know that there was such consistency between my spoken and written word, and in particular to know the development of my written voice on the side of authenticity and away from third-party formalism. A long-term colleague who was not at Bled wrote 'I love the blog. I can almost hear your voice as I read it – which is something that many authors strive towards and fail to achieve. It is gentle and mindful to read and I can feel myself relaxing into the thinking.' A conference delegate expressed that 'Your writing opened a door to you – and you write in such a beautiful way, dancing the line between reflective, personal and general/transferable.' Another stated that 'I marveled at having been left with such a clearly positive impression of your life direction, despite the sense of Daniel-sometimes-being-less-than-totally-enamoured-with-his-world.'

***Others' personal reflections evoked by the blog.***

As an autoethnographer you have to worry about the provocation posed by Andrew Sparkes – 'autoethnography - self-indulgence or something more?' I was relieved to find that beyond respondents feeling that they now knew more about me; that my writing also caused them not only to look inside, but

to capture their self-insights in written form. One wrote 'I have just read the blog and am utterly transfixed! I need to read it again; it took me through a scarily wide range of my own emotions and reactions.' Another wrote 'Wow - great blog post! a right paisley swirl of being and experiencing - complexity with patterns. I get that sense of guilt-list - something I have been actively limiting in my own life, but still manages to show up from time to time. How we choose to show up as our authentic selves and damn the critics!'

A delegate wrote 'I enjoyed your reflections, wrote quite a bit about the conference myself- including some of the feedback- but have not asked anyone permission for placing some comments etc in it- I will send if you'd be interested a partly raw reflective document.. or perhaps can also distill it further first and then share... -still a pondering- in it also sits a question on "what do I claim", want to shine my light on... I am both starting to make piece with that needing to "grow itself"- but at the same time I feel impatient for some completion too! It's bringing together my theory strands which interested my: feminism and artful knowing as well as phenomenology; but how to interweave all of those strands is yet a quest..'

Another talked of the cathartic effect that sharing such a blog can have. She wrote 'It (Your blog and your responses to my first email) moved me very much. I opened it just after a bruising meeting with my Line Manager (me having won an internal award, him not giving me the hours to do it) and your thoughtful comments brought me to tears such that I couldn't think how to respond that would explain all of this! Distance from the moment makes it easier! Perhaps not too surprisingly, I have been ill since then, back in work today.'

### ***Propulsion towards collaboration or parallel work evoked by the Bled Blog***

It is clear that beyond evoking self- reflection, the blog acted for some as a spur for action. In this mode one wrote 'I'm particularly excited about the notion of the CCRG morphing into something more creative. You know that I've been playing for a long time on my love of music and love of leadership. Do you do Twitter? I'm finding it quite a useful and interesting way of blending the two.' Another suggested that 'I would love to write with you...and present with you in the future.' In a similar vein another suggested 'Let me know if we should exchange articles (written by ourselves off course) so that we can develop better awareness of who we are and where our interests lie.'

One was prompted to directly engage with AoMO at Brighton in 2018, and to invite me to a number of archetypes workshops. Another alluded to the cautionary nature of contemporary Higher Education, and of how 'I would relish the opportunity to explore discovering/releasing voice for myself - how careful I need to be in work these days, higher education being no longer 'high' but quite low business issues about brand, numbers and money. I can think about it in terms of being a woman, I can think about it in terms of being this particular woman! I would relish the opportunity to explore collectively too, to explore the impact this can have to enable others to discover/release their own voices.'

When I shared recent publications with another delegate, we discovered that we had both have an Account of Practice due to be published in the same journal this autumn. In the face of this synchronicity, she wrote 'We may be able to reflect together as a way of joint reflexivity? I find it interesting too that you are male and a little further in this academic path than I am; I seem to revert to "bringing more femininity" into this facilitation world- and would be interested in how you look at that too.'

With regard to the Critical Coaching Research Group, one respondent welcomed the suggested shift in emphasis: "this shift from Critical to Creative is very juicy. It's clearly the shift from Techne to Phronesis isn't it! I love the challenge of critical thinking and my ego gets such a lovely stroke from it all but as we know it can be a little destructive.'

Other reflections welcomed the joining of voices that the blog invited: 'I see the threads weaving themselves together and whilst the form is still unknown, they are dancing along to a strong tune from that lovely voice of yours and others.'

## Epilogue

I am not at all sure if it is possible to neatly wrap up this account. Even as I write (once more on the train), responses to the blog continue to flow my way. Salient dates that add to the mix keep dropping from the sky, magically fitting into the schedule, with the most delightful synchronicity. At a personal level I feel shifts coming about as result of committing to this writing, then sharing these texts on a rolling basis with others. I remember when I returned from the singing week in Riga four years ago - to teach for the first time at my current institution - when my voice felt clear and strong post the intensive voice work, and the ensuing learning experience for all concerned was a rich one. In similar fashion, I have found myself at the start of this new academic year. The spirit of the singing group was brought to my leadership in the classroom. In this academic year I feel that I am similarly engaging with students with more awareness of my voice - and it is satisfying to note that this is evoking an already powerful learning response. My writing feels as though it has become more fearless, more authentic, while alternative writings of mine are finding a path towards publication. With all of these developments, what was only five weeks ago an emergent Venn diagram has now progressed towards a rudimentary Gantt chart mapping the year before me, and beyond. That act of constructing this Gantt chart has felt grounding, as the fear of the crashing together of various elements of what was being invited from the universe was growing by the day, alongside of the growing excitement.

It is clear then that this engagement with blog has taken me to places both in my interior and exterior world that I would not have glimpsed had I not subjected myself to this writerly discipline. There is no doubt that this writing - and the sharing of the same - has greatly assisted in defending against the inertia gradient that is likely to undermine all post-conference good intentions. It will be interesting to see how this pans out over time, and to assess to what extent 'writing as inquiry' continues to play a part in persistence and development of ideas and collaborative action beyond Bled.

I am not sure if I am now going to jump to a generalizable conclusion that such blogging is the way to defend against post-conference decay. Apart from anything else AoMO is set up as an exceptional conference and it would not be reasonable to compare it to a more conventional conference. On the other hand you would be inclined to think that blogging would do no harm in enabling persistence, no matter what the context.

In the qualitative tradition that autoethnographic inhabits, where 'show' is valorized over 'tell', then I would not presume to tell the reader of this paper how to interpret what she reads. However I have been fascinated by the variety of responses to flow from my creatures to date and am intrigued to know how this might impact on third person inquirers. I say third person inquirers as - in a naturalistic way - this call and response process has evoked the classical third part action research progression from self to close connections then out into the wider world. There is little doubt that from my perspective this engagement comprises an Action Research project, as the scope of the work clarifies and the extent of the (selective) crowd-sourcing develops apace. Please consider your self part of the selective crowd, dear reader, and feel free to share any sense-making that has occurred: as well of course as indicating was in which you would might to join this / these projects at [d.doherty@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:d.doherty@mdx.ac.uk).

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October 2016

## Reflective practice/curating practice

Jo Trelfa

*Theme: Making the intangible tangible: stories as a process for organisational and management inquiry*

### Abstract

Although it has been suggested that practice is demonstrably able to speak for itself, practice cannot actually speak; it is practitioners who make explicit the tacit elements of their practice (Hall & Lloyd, 2016:np).

One of the ways that practitioners are encouraged, indeed required, to 'tell their practice' is via reflective practice.

Reflective practice is the process of articulating professional decision-making, of bringing to awareness the threads that shape interventions and judgments, and of becoming critically alert to the forces that influenced them. This is assumed as achieved through the provision of accounts of practice, stories, with a view that to do so will heighten understanding of and develop individual professional practice as well as the practice of organisations themselves. Mainstream approaches to reflective practice, then, consider accounts told in this way both as true and as a gateway to the development and improvement of practice. The predominant focus is on reflections on practice after the event generated via writing and dialogue. In the conference I offer that these notions are problematic and instead work with a conception of those engaging in reflective practice acting as curators of stories of their practice, with 'curating' being a decision-making process of selection of "what to keep and what to discard" (McCartney, 2015:137). Here the process before curation is an important focus of reflective practice. It then follows that the outcome of curation can be creative. To this conference I brought three pieces of interactive art created from my reflections regarding my practice as senior lecturer in higher education. I do not consider myself to be an artist; the point here is one of creative engagement that offers a radically different approach to reflective practice, with 'radical' meaning getting (back) to or expounding the roots of 'the true principle' of reflective practice (borrowing from Fromm, in Neill, 1960:xii).

### Introduction: reflective practice and professional practice

Although it has been suggested that practice is demonstrably able to speak for itself, practice cannot actually speak; it is practitioners who make explicit the tacit elements of their practice (Hall & Lloyd, 2016:np).

One of the ways that practitioners are encouraged, indeed required to 'tell their practice' is via reflective practice.

Broadly the term 'reflective practice' refers to approaches and tools that facilitate the critical interrogation of professional practice in the social professions from management to medicine, social work to teaching. It involves the examination of decisions made and action taken by the provision of stories of practice that highlight antecedents to the decision or action, why that particular intervention, critical evaluation, and exploration of alternative options and outcomes. Where 'narrative' is a "recounting of events that are organised in a temporal sequence", a partial description of experience, 'story' is a "detailed organisation of narrative events arranged in a (story)



structure based on time” (Kim, 2016:7). Story, therefore, is a fuller description of experience. Telling stories about practice in this way is undertaken with a view that such engagement will heighten critical understanding of, and transform, individual professional practice and as a result develop the practice in, and the service of, the organisations in which the individuals work. Schön (1999 in O’Reilly et al 1999:14-15) distinguishes between the “indescribable”, ‘things that are hard to describe’, and the “undiscussable”, things that we choose not to discuss. The principle underpinning the practice of reflective practice is that whilst aspects are ‘undiscussable they remain under the table’, hidden from view to self and wider scrutiny. As Moffat (1996:53) argues, through reflective practice a professional practitioner is able to “become aware of that which they know through practice but also [bring] forward this knowledge in a manner that it can be considered for inquiry and critique”. It makes what otherwise would be intangible, tangible.

In the UK the significance of reflective practice has grown such that it has become a core feature of professionally qualifying programmes in Higher Education preparing undergraduate and postgraduate students *for* work, and as an approach and mind-set of continuing development and sustained professional life *in* work. Indeed, for these reasons reflective practice is increasingly recognised as a significant element of gradueness for *all* Higher Education (HE) students in the UK, whatever their programme of study.

Whilst the discussion that follows is relevant to a critical discussion of reflective practice in all of the disciplines and fields identified, for purposes of focus I concentrate here on its inclusion in HE professionally qualifying programmes. The ideas and concepts to which I refer are drawn from doctorate research I am carrying out whilst a Senior Lecturer on programmes for those who will be employed in the social sciences. My work in higher education follows over a decade working with communities, groups and individuals in a range of contexts and settings, in and outside of the UK. Whilst throughout this time reflective practice has been an anchor of my practice, I began to question the way in which it is facilitated, referred to and embedded in work contexts and education programmes. Earlier research showed that in contrast to the critical and transformative potential espoused above, the rhetoric and practice surrounding reflective practice has evolved such that those involved in it become constructed as and construct themselves as tools for the production and evidencing of particular outcomes in prescribed ways of story-telling (Trelfa, 2016). The result is an irony of something purporting to be centred on self but in reality renders it and the messiness of experience invisible, or at best requires a tidy, clean version, so rather than transformative the process and outcomes are conservative and controlled.

The aim of my doctorate research, therefore, is to reclaim and redefine the practices of reflective practice: to discover radically different ways to conceptualise and facilitate it so that it becomes a meaningful, political, personal, individual and collective engagement, with ‘radical’ meaning ‘roots’, that is, getting (back) to, or, expounding, the roots (from the Latin *radicalis* and *radix*) of reflective practice.

I define reflective practice as

a rigorous, disciplined approach for noticing, attending to, and inquiring into aspects of practice, where ‘practice’ is understood as meaning actions undertaken to serve others.

## **Reflection on practice**

Donald Schön is widely cited as being central to early work on reflective practice. Influenced by Humanism and ideas of self and self-development plus Deweyian understanding of the significance of experience in learning, Schön's focus was professional practice. His inquiry examined the way in which professionals engage with "indeterminate zones of practice", those that present them with unclear direction, surprise, uncertainty and dilemmas (1987:6). He referred to this as the "swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution" (1983:42) in contrast to manageable "high ground" where prescribed technique and guidelines can be applied. In such swampy circumstances Schön (1983:50) suggested that practitioners reflect "on the understandings which have been implicit" in their 'actions and understandings' by bringing them to the surface, critically unpicking them, and putting them back together in new ways which they take into future action. His research concluded that they do this in two ways, through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action involves "think[ing] about doing something while doing it" (Schön, 1983:54), so in "a stretch of time within which it is still possible to make a difference to the outcomes of action (Schön, 1995:np). Reflection-on-action refers to how

in the relative tranquillity of a post-mortem, [professionals] think back on a project they have undertaken, a situation they have lived through, and they explore the understandings they have brought to their handling of the case. (Schön, 1983:61).

Weight of attention in mainstream literature and the way that reflective practice is approached centres on the latter, on reflection-on-action. Typically, it involves individuals writing stories of their practice in journals, diaries, blogs, portfolios, etc. and/or telling them to colleagues (review, debrief), a supervisor, line-manager, or reflective practice groups. In other words, practitioners tell stories of an action, intervention, engagement, after the event and sometimes quite a while after it, in order to unpack what happened, why, and alternative possibilities as detailed above.

### **Telling stories about practice**

The issue with a focus on story-telling about practice is that we perceive and interpret the surprising, uncertain or unclear event, indeed all our actions, through a limited perceptual and visual lens (Cavanagh 2011; Craig 2012) and via a flawed, biased cognitive system (see Trelfa, 2016). Added to this, in recent neuroscience work Ellamil et al (2016) found that the area of the brain involved in problem-solving is memory; memory is the brain response from which narrative thought or speech stems. We draw on our past experiences to solve problems – we make associations, connections, links, and we therefore are likely to do what we have done in the past and interpret events and our engagement in them in established, habitual ways. Finally, these "established patterns" (Mason 2002:8) or habits are our 'theories-in-use' (Argyris & Schön, 1974:17); they serve to ensure and maintain our "constancy" and indeed we actively "avoid changing them" (ibid). Our memories of events as we reflect on them afterwards maintain our biographical identity, that is, our sense of who we are and/or how we would like others to see us. In sum, we 'modify and refine' memories about events, thoughts, actions, behaviours, to maintain and protect the image of self we hold and we categorise, classify, judge and respond to that layer rather than the 'thing' itself.

So, whilst potentially every act of practice "is also an act of learning...about the [clients], learning about the situation, learning about oneself" (Mason 2002:7) instead we tell ourselves familiar, established, habitual, limited, biased stories about what happened, our action/role in them, and why we did what we did.

Therefore, I argue we need a different way to engage in reflective practice, one that challenges the established, typical notions of it as the production of stories of practice that are reified, cognitively dominated (Tomlinson, 1999a; 1999b) and constructed as located inside an “intact coherent self waiting...to be recorded through language” (Spry, 2011:503).

To this end, I approach the process of reflective practice as curation. Rather than stories told through reflective practice as fixed truths, albeit ones that are unpacked and explored, the method taken in my doctoral work pivots on the definition of reflective practice referred to above, of reflective practice as a “rigorous, disciplined approach for noticing”.

## **Noticing**

In contrast to the predominate attention of established reflective practice being reflection-on-action, focus here is on reflection-in-action, the least theorised aspect by and of Schon’s work (Eraut, 1994). I define noticing as

Fleeting but active attention to and marked consciousness of

- internal feeling, emotion, thought, image, sensation, felt sense;
- external stimuli;
- and/or not, their relationship, association, connection.

Therefore, in contrast to telling familiar habitual stories, the emphasis is on capturing this fleeting consciousness. Exploring this with groups of student practitioners over a three-year period led to the emergence of “threshold concepts” (Meyer & Land, 2006a). Threshold concepts are “akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something” (Meyer & Land, 2006b:3), and, as such need to be ‘transformative, irreversible, integrative, and bounded’ (Meyer & Land, 2006b). In sum, they support access to something that is otherwise “troublesome”, that is “counter-intuitive, alien (emanating from another culture or discourse), or incoherent (discrete aspects are unproblematic but there is no organising principle)” (Meyer & Land, 2006b:9). The previous research I had carried out into student and practitioner understanding and experiences of reflective practice showed that it was indeed ‘troublesome’ (Trelfa, 2016; Trelfa & Telfer, 2014).

The threshold concepts are ‘Gaze’ and ‘Glance’, capitalised to distinguish them from the generic terms and their colloquial use.

### Noticing: stage 1

Noticing depends on Glance rather than the Gaze of traditional reflective practice. Rather than the fixed ‘prolonged, contemplative, aloof, disengaged’ (Bryson, 1983:94) stare after a tranquil interval” (ibid), Glance is the fleeting but potent moment of engaging with complexity, richness and fluidity. Noticing ones Glances requires “capturing self in the act” (Macintyre & Buck, 2008:318). These Glances are themselves captured through creative and immediate methods. Mason (2002:33) writes about the conscious marking of what is noticed; Glances have to be marked, noted down, but as Glances they do not involve detail such as story, what happened, to whom, and so forth. They are more narrative than story. These are dated and kept.

### Noticing: stage 2

After a period of time one looks back over the record of Glances to see what they have in common, what is different/distinct, and what surprises. It is a process of curation. Hans Ulrich Obrist (2015:1) explains how curating is important in its own right; rather than 'mere' background work, it is about 'bringing elements into proximity with each other, making junctions, opening new routes'. The curation is as important as the outcome.

### Noticing: stage 3

This is followed by a coalescence of what has been curated into areas, through, for example, Newman's (2006) process of identifying metaphors. For the conference I engaged in this process of noticing via Glances, leading to the creation of three artistic pieces presented for percipient engagement. "Percipients" is a term to counter that of 'participant' or even audience. Whilst these terms suggest prescribed and inscribed objects, 'percipients' refers to "A particular kind of participant whose active, embodied and sensorial engagement alters and determines a process and its outcomes" (Myers, 2008:173).

The pieces were:

- Two construction lights giving off light and heat (used by builders when working on projects), set on the floor and altered to be connected to a motion sensor so movement triggered them to switch on (and therefore off when no movement);
- A round mirror with a cracked edge surrounded by a mass of black snakes, mounted on the wall, so when looked into one sees an image of one's face surrounded by snakes; and,
- A box of six eggs that are realistic in appearance, touch and weight.

### Noticing: stage 4

The outcomes of stage 3 are then considered in their own right. What do *they* say about the practice that has been captured? This creates new stories about practice, stories that surprise, that to the individual are unfamiliar rather than habitual and have not been limited and constructed by finite and fixed methods. The stories are created through a range of methods that retain the freshness.

What follows is the story of the pieces, the outcome of engagement in reflective practice via noticing and Glance.

### **The curation of my Glances.**

- **The construction lights**

Included in my Glances are depictions and representations of the different places and spaces I inhabit as Lecturer, moving between and in them and being between and in them. I chose these Glances as they stood out in terms of their vividness and therefore visibility.

*I shut and lock my office door behind me, checking I have everything I will need for the three hour session and this includes a cup of tea. All this is cumbersome to carry. I don't usually drink tea yet I always take one to my teaching sessions. It's something about warmth, warm drink going down inside, comforting; sips, the provision of a pause, I can take a drink of tea and think, stop for a moment. But thinking now [as I write], I also notice that lecturers carry mugs of tea, students don't. Demarcation; a symbol of difference, of power.*

*I get to the door of the room; the noise is high, students returning after a weekend. I hesitate at the transition from corridor to room, to Jo-not-teaching to Jo-who-is-teaching, a threshold with a quality*

*of gathering: gathering of thoughts, energy, passion; and a quality of movement: of home, family, other life/lives to the background leaving what I am going to do in the session to be at the foreground; and I walk in brightly. Sometimes this transition and threshold is blurred, rushed, difficult, impossible; my thoughts, my body, feel crowded, equally pressing clumps jostling and calling for my attention. Sometimes my body feels heavy, full, slow. Sometimes I want to sit, quietly, look out at Dartmoor; sometimes I want to go for a walk, to feel the gentle waves of outside moving inside. Sometimes I want to continue with other trains of thoughts and actions. And I can't do these things; I am teaching. But today I too have returned from a weekend and have a sense of fulfilment and of being centred; I walk in brightly.*

### Body and professional practice

The lights represent the embodied and bodied feelings and emotions, calls and pulls that jostle for my attention.

In the social sciences/social professions, there is a lack of focus in academic literature on “noncognitive ways of knowing” (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012:120), yet connection with sensations, the body as source of knowing, and somatic awareness are an essential part of one's practice, but usually missing from stories of practice. Without language, concepts or encouragement to consider bodily knowing, practitioners will not articulate it. Without methods to privilege bodily knowing that are at least comparable to those that favour visible and cognitive aspects of practice they will remain invisible. Without theory to underpin the kinesis of practice, then, if considered at all, focus will move into the cognitive realm as soon as possible, if not start and end there in entirety.

### Movement in the classroom

The lights also reflect the role of movement in the classroom, physical, emotional, conceptually/cognitively. Teaching in higher education has always been about inspiring, conveying and engendering passion, about provoking and evoking. Revell & Wainright (2009:217) highlight the importance of lecturer as “performer” and “entertainer”. They assert it is this that creates “magic in the classroom”. My Glances involve noting, naming and exploring the qualities, skills, and approaches, but importantly noticing how these are shaped by purpose, space, place, activity and my own identities ‘as and of’ lecturer (see Trelfa, forthcoming). The lights therefore also reflect the experience of performer and entertainer: keeping the metaphorical lights on is tiring – keeping moving is tiring! The lights evoke and provoke that action. That is, to light up the room/ the words being said/the individuals in the room/ me, action is needed; I have to keep moving, internally and externally.

### Changes to higher education

However, the lights also represent and reflect changes in higher education in the UK that have come increasingly to conceptualise the student as consumer not producer and lecturers being required to perform according to control ‘from above’ (Evetts, 2003; Gould & Taylor, 1996). This managerial and political control has exponentially assumed omnipotence over one's own professional activity (Biesta, 2007). For instance, in the UK league tables of student experiences of teaching hold institutional and national attention; the way this impacts on lecturers brings to mind the expression of ‘the tail wagging the dog’. This is not to say that student experience of my teaching is not important, what happens in my sessions is both influenced by students and co-produced with them, but it is to make the point that that the undercurrent of ideological and political control drives

activity seen on the surface. I am being asked to move more, and move in particular ways, to hold students attention, hold student numbers, hold positions in league tables, come what may and as priority over anything else. Provocatively Biesta concludes that as a result professional judgement is now “inferior and should ultimately be banned” (2007:3).

### **The mirror**

In Greek mythology Medusa was one of three Gorgon sisters, gorgon meaning a female, and coming from the Greek word *gorgos* meaning dreadful (Garcia, 2013). What we know Medusa for is her writhing, threatening snake hair and turning anything she looks at to stone; ossifying that which had life and was fluid; fixing and solidifying; capturing what is dynamic and weighing it down. It is also significant that it is a woman who is doing this; the Female, castrating life, cutting off movement and flow. In fact, Medusa’s head itself becomes decapitated and this alone through the eyes, the direction of her gaze, can ossify. She is depicted as both beautiful and monstrous, “a dangerous seductress” (Currie, 2011:175).

My Glances consist of capturing numerous experiences of learning outcomes, assessment requirements, grading matrices, inspection activities, and so forth, all of which are wrapped up in a wider discourse of care for the student. Take learning outcomes, the outcomes that students are expected to reach at the end of the semester. These are determined for every module (or unit of a degree programme) in order to ensure that students are aware of expectations and are assessed fairly. However, they are not determined for each student but for the module as a whole, so that means the same learning outcomes for anything from between 10 and 110+ individuals, and they are written at the stage of designing the module so not in connection with it being taught. This also applies to any module on or including reflective practice, a fixing of what each person will get out of what is essentially their own reflection on (and even in) practice. It ossifies that which had life and was fluid, it fixes and solidifies, captures what is dynamic and weighs it down, all couched in discourse of care (the Female), the care and the monstrosity of it.

To return to Medusa, initially in mythology the power to turn to stone was in her presence only, but in later iterations this became condensed to only her sight – but either way, it is a story of two halves, of being attractive to suitors including the sea god Neptune, but also of being the “snaky haired monster who petrifies anyone she looks at” (Currie, 2011:172). However, one telling of her story is of the event that triggers this metamorphosis which was being raped by that sea god. Traditionally, her ability to petrify is seen as both a threat to the Male – so her beauty incites and her sight turns them to stone – however, less understood is that the transformation is forced on her by the Male (control and order) (Currie, 2011). As we look in the mirror and see ourselves as Medusa, we are invited to consider our complicity with such a process

Here, then, with the mirror I am both reflecting and representing the ossification of vitality and reflecting the need to reclaim what is used to suppress into something that can empower (Bowers, 1990). Helene Cixous in her treatise *The Laugh of Medusa* urges Man (she means both men in the gendered sense of the word but also the Masculine, the need to order and control), to not “bank on everyone’s blindness and passivity” (1976:17); she invites, indeed demands, the reclamation of vitality, voice, the body – she says “it’s up to [us] to break old circuits” (1976:17).

### **The eggs**

Borrowing from White's (1976, cited in Taylor, 2016) metaphor of croquet balls and eggs, if we put the political drive to control higher education (including, for example, national league tables and learning outcomes), so, croquet balls, in a container with individual learning journeys, the eggs, and shake, the eggs will come off worse.

Further, students are increasingly being perceived and approached as 'fragile eggs'. Catherine Ecclestone traces development in discourse, policy and systems that implicitly and overtly have come to hold students as fragile and how anything that challenges this is constructed as "unwelcome and uncaring" (2009:np). Increasingly lecturers are being asked, required, guided, advised to gently hold students, to handle them carefully through their programmes and to the end point of their degree. This applies equally to the practice of reflective practice: lecturers teach and students learn the models of reflective practice, external expectations of what is involved and apply the pro forma that lecturers produce, all within a discourse of care, but it becomes a hoop jumping exercise.

However, another perspective of eggs is transformation – eggs do not stay as eggs, unless they have died; eggs become something, they grow; I as a lecturer am growing old; I do not want to find myself old, to fight being old, to despair being old, I want to grow old with joy at the gifts it brings, with joy at the opportunities I can create. The students I work with are also growing old, but just now are at a different point in that journey. What right do I have to block them from the gifts and opportunities their own journey can bring and they can create? What has the business, the mechanisms and structures, of higher education become? What has the potential and vibrancy of reflective practice become?

I do not share the notion of students as fragile eggs, of students as consumers not producers. The eggs in the box are not really fragile.

The eggs in the box are used to help hens brood. For a hen to hatch an egg she needs to sit on it for 21 days and she will do this when she has a clutch of eggs. Ironically, however, "the broodiness trait has been bred out of many modern chicken breeds" because whilst a hen is broody they are not laying any more eggs which means "expensive non-productive periods" for farmers (Omlet, 2015:np). Leaving artificial eggs like those in the egg box presented in a nest helps the hen to go broody; they will sit on and off them, connecting with them and not, for increasingly longer periods of time, and once the period is of a longer length they are ready to sit on real eggs and bring new life into being.

### **The broodiness of learning and reflective practice**

Higher education and the practice of reflective practice is 'breeding out' the messiness of experience, the process of claiming a fleeting Glance and creatively sitting on it to follow its own learning journey. It is forcing making the intangible tangible in restricted and particular ways that reflect political and organisational/institutional drivers and not the learner's (practitioners) own broodiness. It forces the telling of controlled, managed, finite, familiar, habitual stories.

My PhD concerns reclaiming and redefining the practices of reflective practice to discover radically different ways to conceptualise and facilitate it so that it becomes a meaningful, political, personal, individual and collective engagement, with 'radical' meaning 'roots', that is, getting to, or, expounding, the roots of what it was originally about. In my research I define and am exploring bringing into being a reflective practice that is about:

- A rigorous, disciplined approach for noticing, attending to, and inquiring into aspects of practice, where 'practice' is understood as meaning actions undertaken to serve others;
- That develops a pedagogy of embodiment, embeds a messy methodology, plays with the liminality and juncture of arts and social science, and embraces the rich, complex messiness of the intangible and the creative and political act of making that tangible; and
- Whilst for the purposes of focus this paper has centred on higher education, the breeding out the messiness of experience, the process of claiming a fleeting Glance and creatively sitting on it to follow its own learning journey, along with the forcing of making the intangible tangible in restricted and particular ways that reflect political and organisational/institutional drivers and not the practitioners own broodiness, is relevant to all disciplines and professions, from management to medicine, social work to teaching.

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